


LOST IN THE ARCTIC

CAPT. EJNAR MIKKELSEN



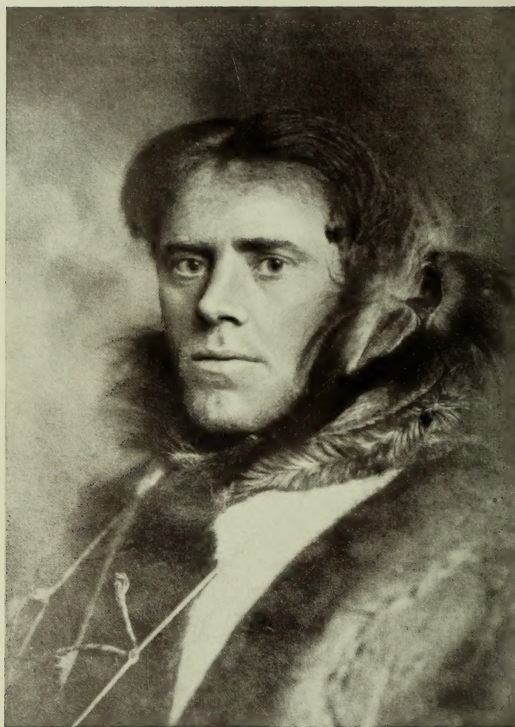
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LOST IN THE ARCTIC



CAPTAIN EJNAR MIKKELSEN

[Frontispiece.]

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Lost in the Arctic

BEING THE STORY OF THE 'ALABAMA'
EXPEDITION, 1909-1912. BY
EJNAR MIKKELSEN, AUTHOR
OF "CONQUERING THE ARCTIC
ICE." WITH NUMEROUS
ILLUSTRATIONS AND
A MAP

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO MY FIRST CHIEF ON ARCTIC JOURNEYS
CAPTAIN G. C. AMDRUP, R.N.
WITH THANKS FOR ALL THAT
HE TAUGHT ME

INTRODUCTION

IN the summer of 1906 the Danmarks Expedition started out, under the leadership of Mr. L. Mylius Erichsen, with the object of exploring the as yet unexplored part of the north-east coast of Greenland, from Cape Bismarck to Cape Bridgemann, covering over six degrees of latitude. The idea appeared so ambitious that many doubted whether the expedition would succeed in carrying it out in its entirety, and among those interested in arctic exploration the return of the explorers was awaited with considerable anxiety.

Two years later, in August of 1908, a message from the Danmarks Expedition was flashed across the world: Object attained, coast surveyed, the outline of Greenland now known throughout its extent, important scientific results obtained in various fields, but the leader, Mylius Erichsen, with Lieut. Høeg Hagen and the Eskimo Brönlund perished after a heroic struggle against the difficulties of the country. The result of the expedition, a piece of surveying work the difficulty of which few perhaps can better appreciate than I myself, was in part attained by the death of these three men.

They started out in March 1907 on a long sledge trip, and had passed the North-east Runding when they said good-bye to Capt. Kock's sledge party, who were to go northward to Cape Bridgemann, while Mylius Erichsen and his companions were to make their way westward to the Cape Glacier discovered by Peary. In this they succeeded, but the exploration of the large and newly discovered Danmarks Fjord had taken many days, and their provisions were almost exhausted when they again encountered Capt. Kock at Cape Rigsdagen on the 25th of May. In spite of the shortness of food, however, the three men would not relinquish their plan, which was to make connection with Peary's survey, and the next day the two parties separated, Kock and his companions going south, while Mylius Erichsen, Høeg Hagen and Brönlund continued their way westward into unknown regions.

This was the last that was seen of the three men.

The summer went, and as they had not returned to their ship at Cape Bismarck, their companions began to be uneasy. In the

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autumn of 1907 a relief expedition was sent out, under the leadership of Thostrup, the mate, who, with his companions, attempted to get into touch with the missing men, at the same time laying down depots, large enough and at sufficiently frequent intervals, to enable Mylius Erichsen and his companions to make their way down the coast without difficulty in case they themselves should not succeed in finding them.

Thostrup's progress was, however, checked by open water at Mallemuk Fjæld, and on the 17th of October he was forced to return, leaving behind as great a store of provisions as possible. This was never found by those for whom it was intended, but I will take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Thostrup, Dr. Lindhart and Tobias for the work they carried out here; they did not succeed in saving the lives of their companions, but save life they did, three years later, for without the depots laid down by Thostrup and Lindhart, Iversen and I could scarcely have managed to get through.

In the spring of 1908 Kock started out to search for the three men, and found the body of Brönlund, who had managed, beyond doubt in the face of extraordinary difficulties, to reach the depot at Lambert's Land before he died. It is to this brave man we owe the fact that the work he and his companions had carried out was not done in vain, and that Kock was able to bring back the sketch-maps made by Høeg Hagen. Kock also found Brönlund's diary, which contained sufficient information to give some idea of what the three men had gone through in the course of the summer. The report ended with the following note (in Danish)—

“Perished 79 Fjord after attempt to return over inland ice in November. I arrive here in waning moonlight, and could not go further for frozen feet and darkness.

“Bodies of the others are in middle of Fjord off glacier (about two and a half leagues). Hagen died 15th of November, Mylius about ten days later.

“JØRGEN BRÖNLUND.”

None of either Mylius Erichsen's or Høeg Hagen's diaries or observation books were found, however, and as the greater part of Brönlund's diary was written in Eskimo and only translated later, Kock had no means of knowing where to look for these.

When the Danmarks Expedition returned, the question was
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Carl Unger.
C. H. Jørgensen.

Hans P. Olsen.

Aagaard.

Ejnar Mikkelsen.

Georg Poulsen.
Wilhelm Laub.

THE MEMBERS OF OUR EXPEDITION

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raised as to the desirability of making a search for these diaries, and I determined to attempt the task. I applied to the Committee of the Danmarks Expedition, consisting of Commander Holm, R.N., Capt. Amdrup, R.N., Consul-General Glückstadt and Consul Henius, and suggested that an expedition should be sent out, partly in order to look for the ill-fated men, and partly to try and find the place where their journals had been left. I had prepared a plan, which I submitted to the Committee, who approved it, and consented to act as Committee for this new expedition under my leadership.

Thanks to the Committee, the necessary funds (50,000 Kr.) were found, half the amount being granted by the Danish Government and the remainder furnished by private subscription.

The financial part of the business being thus arranged, the sloop *Alabama* of Stavanger was purchased in March 1909. The vessel, which was of only forty tons, was not originally intended for the ice, and had therefore to be strengthened and partially rebuilt. A motor was fitted in, and by the end of May we were ready to take in our cargo—provisions for eighteen months.

The crew consisted of only six men beside myself, viz. :—

Wilhelm Laub, First Lieutenant in the Royal Navy.
C. H. Jørgensen, First Lieutenant of the Royal Infantry
Iver P. Iversen, Asst. Engineer in the Royal Navy.
Hans P. Olsen, Mate.
Georg Poulsen, Mate.
Carl Unger, Carpenter.

Before commencing the account of my journey, I must once more thank the many friends—too numerous for me to mention them all by name—who supported the expedition with advice, with money, or with gifts, both before the start and after the return, and express my regret that the wreck of the *Alabama* rendered the cost greater than originally anticipated. But first and last I thank the four members of the Committee, whose interest in the exploration of Greenland induced them to take upon themselves the heavy and responsible task of sending out, first the Danmarks Expedition, and later the expedition of which I am now about to tell.

EJNAR MIKKELSEN.

Copenhagen,
December 15, 1912.

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CHAPTER I

NORTHWARD BOUND

The start—Death of the dogs—Voyage to Angmasalik—
The Eskimos—Final departure from Iceland—We run on to
the ice in a storm—Nearly wrecked—The *Alabama* ice-
bound—A close shave—Greenland at last.

WE had been working for months to get clear, for weeks and days we had toiled, encouraged by the thought that every hour brought us nearer to the start. But there was much to be done, and the work seemed to increase as time went on. No rest day or night; all day we were busy making purchases, arranging and stowing away the thousand things that are indispensable to an Arctic expedition, and each night there were sheaves of accounts to be gone through, endless calculations to be made before we could think of sleep. At last the great day came. Everything was ready, and we were all in high spirits when we met on the *Alabama*, able at last to say "We're off!" And yet, in spite of all, it was hard to say good-bye, starting off as we were into the unknown, severing old ties, perhaps for ever. One haunting thought was ever present—should we reach home again? Glad as we were to be ready for sea at last, the shadow of parting hung heavy on us all: the sooner it was over, the better.

At last the little crowd of friends and relatives went down the gangway, the deck was clear, a column of black smoke told that the motor was at work, the hawsers were

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hauled in, and the *Alabama* moved slowly out from the quay. Then wavings and farewells from ship and shore; figures grew smaller and voices fainter as the distance increased, and soon our little vessel was gliding out of the harbour, sped by good wishes from those left behind.

Poor old *Alabama*—all the good wishes could not save her. Well for us then that we could not know how the old ship was doomed to perish in the ice of the Far North. Parting was soon forgotten, before us lay all the immense adventure of the unknown, and joyfully we set our course northward through the Sound.

That was on the 20th of June, 1909; we were bound first of all for the Faroes, a voyage which, however, took some time. Calm and foul winds and heavy gales delayed our progress, and it was not until the morning of the 3rd of July that we sighted the rugged coast of Suderö through the mist. A few hours later we cast anchor outside Thorshavn.

The next few days passed pleasantly enough, but while we were making merry with our good friends on the islands, and enjoying a final taste of hospitality before bidding good-bye to civilisation, there fell a bolt from the blue in the shape of the *Hans Egede*, which came sailing in from the west bound for Thorshavn with sorry news for us.

We had gone off to a whaling station for meat, but had left before the telephone could announce her arrival, and as we rounded the point we saw to our surprise the three slender masts. Mistake was impossible—it must be the *Hans Egede*, but we did not dream what dire misfortune it had in store for us.

I shall never forget the joy with which I boarded the *Hans Egede*, or the despair with which I left her. A few minutes sufficed to wreck all my schemes and shatter all my dreams—the whole basis of the expedition, so carefully planned and arranged, was suddenly reduced to chaos. Of the fifty dogs which the *Hans Egede* should have brought

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us, twenty-three had died, and the remainder were in such a condition as to be scarcely worth a charge of shot.

The poor beasts looked miserable indeed, down in the bunkers of the *Hans Egede*; wet, filthy and exhausted, covered with sores, and infected with disease—still worse did they appear when they were brought up on deck, and daylight showed us their pitiable state.

The survivors were brought on board with all possible care, and while my companions tried in vain to persuade them to eat the fresh whale-meat or to drink water, I went up to the telegraph office to send the news of the misfortune which had fallen upon the expedition at the very outset.

And while the deep-sea cables bore the sad message home, my thoughts turned to the future. What was to be done? To go North with the dogs we had left was impossible; as matters stood, the expedition seemed doomed to failure.

The message reached Denmark, and back came the discouraging reply, "Wait and see what can be done."

We waited, but it did not seem that anything could be done. Each day new deaths occurred, and the wire was kept busy with inquiries from the Committee and the Ministry, to which I could only answer, that matters were growing worse and worse. Every one on board felt the disappointment keenly; in vain did our kind hosts on the Faroes seek to cheer us up—we wanted dogs, and they had none to give us.

There was no "vet." in Thorshavn, and we were glad—if indeed we could be said to feel glad at all under the circumstances—to see the cruiser *Hekla* cast anchor outside Thorshavn. In the first place, Captain Block, the commanding officer, was an old traveller with some experience of Greenland, who might be able to give us some useful hints, and we also hoped that the doctor on board might, by a post-mortem examination of some of the dogs

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already dead, be able to discover the cause of death, and advise us as to preventive measures.

Captain Block could, however, only confirm our fears, and Dr. Zachariae, who did not hesitate to turn veterinary surgeon for the occasion, found that some of the dogs which had died had been suffering from inflammation of the lungs. This, however, was only a small part of the general sickness among them; as to the rest, he could form no opinion, but he agreed with us in thinking that the remaining dogs were doomed.

That evening there was a big dinner at the Governor's, and while there I received the long-awaited orders from the Committee—disinfect the ship after consultation with the local medical authority, and proceed to Angmasalik for new dogs. We immediately held a council of war, in which all who had any knowledge of the subject took part, and “talked dog” all the rest of the evening, without, however, arriving at any conclusion as to the fate of the sick animals. The general opinion was that they should be shot, but to this I was loth to agree.

There was a ball on at the club, to which we were also invited, but the contrast between the festivity there and our own despondent frame of mind was too great, and very soon Jørgensen, Laub and I made our escape, went down to the quay, took a boat and went on board. Sentence of death was passed—now to execute it.

Shot followed shot, and soon the decks were streaming with blood. Lights appeared in the houses nearest the water—what were they doing out there? We were putting the poor brutes out of their pain, but as we did so, it seemed as if the last spark of hope died in ourselves. How should we ever carry out our expedition now? It was scarcely likely that we should be able to reach Angmasalik six weeks earlier than any other ship hitherto had done.

Well, the future would have to look after itself—for



TYPICAL SLEDGING DOGS CHAINED ON THE DECK



PUTTING THE POOR BRUTES OUT OF PAIN

[To face page 4.]



. . . A FEW BIG ICEBERGS BUCKING AND SWAYING IN HEAVY SEA

[To face page 5.]

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the present we had this wretched work to get done; shot after shot rang out as we turned our guns upon the unsuspecting beasts that sat or lay about the decks watching our preparations. Nineteen dogs, however, are soon despatched, and half-an-hour later, Unger, who was keeping watch, flung the corpses overboard, while we went to our bunks and turned in. To sleep was difficult—horrible howls rang in our ears, and wondering, pleading eyes stared at us from out the dark.

Next day we turned to with a will, wiping out the traces of last night's massacre. We swilled and scrubbed away as best we could, and later drew up alongside the *Hekla* and got a steam-hose aboard. The ship had to be disinfected, and made ready to receive a new consignment of dogs, all of which took time, so that it was not until the 13th of July that we could bid farewell to Thorshavn and shape our course for Reykiavik *en route* for Angmasalik.

But our misfortunes were not ended yet: the days of disappointment at Thorshavn were but the beginning of the chapter of accidents which we were now to encounter. The wind was against us, and we sailed for days on every possible course but our own. For an hour we would dash along under close-reefed sails, then the wind would drop a little, and finally fall to a dead calm. Onward we must, however; the motor hissed, and the whole ship creaked and groaned in the heavy swell. Then a little breeze would spring up, now from one quarter, now from another; we hauled on sheets and halliards, now on one tack, now on another, taking advantage of every breath of wind, however slight. At last our efforts were rewarded; on the 17th of July we sighted the snowcapped peaks of Iceland.

It was the Opehfals Jokull, towering high above the horizon, glittering white, yet vague, almost transparent, like Japanese paintings of that ethereal, indescribable mountain, whose outlines are yet so sharp and clear. It was a

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lovely sight—but looking at it did not bring us any nearer. The motor was working well, but the heavy swell kept the *Alabama* away to the east, and our spirits sank as we saw that we were drifting farther and farther from our goal.

We would not look at our chart : charts are good friends when all goes well, but when everything goes wrong one hates the sight of them—they are stuffed away out of sight ; what use to sit and measure out distances on them ? What little wind there was was against us, and we kept our course as well as we could towards land, steering for the Jokull. We trimmed our sails, and hauled and turned continually, taking advantage of every breath of wind ; the motor wheezed and groaned, but still we fell away to the eastward, and there stood the peak, white and scornful and splendid, reminding us of Greenland, our longed-for goal, which was ever growing more distant.

On board all was silent, save for the short, sharp orders : Haul in the main sheet ! Stretch up those halliards !—all to little avail. The sails flapped ceaselessly against the masts and booms with an infernal noise : a fit accompaniment to our desponding thoughts.

At last the wind came, and our spirits rose as the *Alabama* dashed ahead at a speed of five to six miles an hour. Now we could talk of Greenland once more, and reckon out where we ought to be to-morrow, if all went well. The charts were examined—six miles an hour, let's see, that means we can reach Reykiavik in so many hours—yes, if the wind lasts. But the wind didn't last, and next day brought a calm again.

Slowly we crawled along the coast, passed Portland and reached the Westman Islands in a dead calm. Here we sighted *Islands Falk*, Laub's old ship ; he was sure that Capt. Brockmeyer would give us a tow,—“and a good dinner into the bargain,” he added as he sprang forward to hoist the signal XYM : “Will you tow us ?” Back came the

NORTHWARD BOUND

answer: "Yes." Then down with the helm and up alongside the *Falk*.

A kindly welcome, a good dinner, and then, best of all, off for Reykiavik at eight miles an hour.

There was joy on board the *Alabama* that night. We sat up on deck in the light summer night, and watched the water tearing past our sides. Point after point along the coast we passed, and in a few hours we had covered a distance that otherwise would have taken us days.

We arrived at Reykiavik on the 20th of July, but here again we had to wait while telegrams were exchanged, and not until the 22nd were we ready to sail again. Our orders were to try and make Angmasalik. If we could reach there and obtain the necessary dogs, then all was well: if we failed to reach Angmasalik, or were unable to get sufficient dogs, then we were to proceed to West Greenland, winter at Holsteinsborg and continue our journey next year.

We got along pretty well to begin with; a fine wind took us over towards the coast of Greenland. The first day passed, and the wind still held; the second day it slackened a little, but we were making progress and holding on our course—or thereabouts.

On the morning of the third day we sighted ice: a few big icebergs, bucking and swaying in the heavy sea. They were the forerunners of the real pack ice, which we encountered some hours later. We had to tack up along the edge of the ice, one hour out and three hours in, but it was all more or less in the right direction—over towards Greenland. And soon we saw the fine heights of Ingolf Fjæld standing out clear and splendid against the evening sky. We recognised the land about Cape Dan, and again began to talk of record runs—it is a way seamen have. Tomorrow we ought to have our dogs on board, or at any rate be lying at anchor off the settlement. Ought to—but we didn't. Up came the fog that so often follows in the wake

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of ice, and hid everything from view. The visible world was suddenly reduced to a little flat disc, with the *Alabama* in the centre.

It is nervous work sailing through ice in a fog, it is impossible to keep an effective look-out, and as likely as not the ship gets run deep into a cul-de-sac, or on to a floe—as chance may direct. One never knows if one is not lying between two great fields of ice, gradually moving towards each other under cover of the fog, with force enough to crush the unconscious vessel that has ventured to put itself in their track. At last we got tired of playing blind-man's buff in this fashion, and moored the ship to a piece of ice, comforting ourselves with the assurance that the fog must soon lift, for there were "holes" in it through which we could see the clear blue sky above us. And lift it did towards evening, enough to permit of our making a start again, but it did not finally disappear until some hours later, when it suddenly vanished altogether, revealing one of those wonderful pictures of splendid colour which Nature in these regions offers as generous compensation for the barrenness of the land.

Far away in the background lay the ice-cap dazzlingly white, and over it still floated yellowish banks of fog, drawn up by currents of invisible air towards the high, dark peaks, whose pointed tops just showed above the veil of mist, and caught the last golden rays of the setting sun. And all around us the rich blue of the sea, strewn with white flakes of ice, and broken here and there by large icebergs, which stood out sharp and distinct against the dark behind, their images reflected in the clear, still water.

Gradually the mist fell away and the peaks stood out more clearly, sharply silhouetted against the flame-coloured sky. Down and still down the mist-wreaths sank, rolling down the mountain-side and pouring out from every cleft and valley, spreading at last like a veil out over the sea.

NORTHWARD BOUND

The colours faded and died away, the sharp outlines of the flocs grew vague, until at last all about us had melted into a dull and formless grey, which shut out everything beyond a few hundred yards' distance.

Feeling our way with the utmost caution, and cursing the fog, we crept in towards the land, threading in and out among the ice, and trusting to instinct rather than to sight, until suddenly the motor gave a mighty thump—and stopped.

There was nothing to be done but to turn in while the engine was being repaired. The rest, however, proved but short, a few hours later the fog lifted, and soon we were through the ice and found ourselves in open water close in to shore.

Half-way up the Angmasalik Fjord the fog came down again, thick and impenetrable, which was anything but pleasant, as the current was strong, and the movements of the ice very violent. We could hear it groaning and crashing all round us, and to make matters worse, the motor stopped again.

For some time we drifted about among the ice, fending it off with poles, or towing with a rope. Down in the engine-room Aagaard and Unger worked away until at last their efforts were rewarded, and we were once more able to steer our way through the drifting ice.

The fog had lifted by now, and over the water we could see four kayaks paddling at full speed towards us. The occupants waved and shouted as if they were afraid we should sail away from them; there was no fear of that, however, for if they were glad to see us, we were even more delighted to meet them. The current had taken us far out of our course, and we had no idea of our whereabouts. Now, however, we could get a pilot, and send word on to the settlement that we were coming.

Off went a man at full speed with a letter to the Chief Trader, Mr. Petersen; we followed slowly, and tried

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in vain to understand the words and gestures of our pilot. The weather was fairly clear, however, and we knew that the settlement of Tassiusok lay somewhere north of where we were, so we held on our course up along the coast.

Care is necessary in dealing with native pilots; they have, as a rule, no very clear idea of what is meant by a ship's draught. Ours tried several times to tempt us in through channels where there was not nearly enough water for the *Alabama*; but worst of all we were unable to interpret with any confidence his everlasting flow of words, and wildly waving arms. He wanted us to keep her away to port—well, he ought to know. It was Laub's watch, and I knew the ship was in good hands, so I went down to supper. Then I relieved him, and took up my stand on the square-sail-yard, the pilot by my side puffing away at a big cigar.

He made a gesture which I understood as meaning, "keep her away to port," and I passed on the order to the man at the helm. Again the same movement from the pilot, and again I passed the order on, when suddenly Laub hailed me from below, calling out to me to be careful; the man must be mad, he did nothing but repeat the same order—keep her away to port.

There is never any harm in being careful; I altered our course, keeping the ship a little nearer what I thought must be the right direction. To my surprise the pilot fairly beamed with delight, he kept on nodding like a Chinese mandarin, until all of a sudden he began again with his eternal waving of the arms—keep her away to port.

I tried to talk to the man, and find out what he really wanted, but it was no use—he spoke Eskimo and I Danish; all he could do was to keep waving his arms as wildly as ever, with his tongue going nineteen to the dozen all the time.

I stood staring out into the fog, when suddenly I saw,



THE MARKET-PLACE, THE SETTLEMENT AT TASSIUSOK SEEN IN BACKGROUND



THE NATIVES AT TASSIUSOK

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THE "ALABAMA"



. . . SEVERAL UMIAKS COMING OUT TO OUR SHIP

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NORTHWARD BOUND

as it were, a shadow fall across the deck. I looked up—"Starboard, for God's sake, hard a-starboard—there's land dead ahead!"

Out of the fog loomed the mighty wall of a huge cliff, almost sheer. It seemed to be hanging over us, and sure enough next moment I could see the foot of the cliff right in our course. But the *Alabama* answered the helm, and swung round, scarcely a couple of hundred yards from the rock we had been steering for.

At last I understood what it was the pilot wanted to say. His thoughts had been miles ahead of the ship; he had been trying to tell us that we should have to round a point somewhere away to the north, some unpronounceable name or other, which I have forgotten. This was what he meant by waving his arms about—we were to keep straight ahead until we made the point, and then over to port. All very right and proper, no doubt, but how were we to know what he meant? As it was, we came very near to never reaching the point at all.

Reach it we did, however, at last, and as we rounded the cape we heard a shot. We sent up a hail in reply, and a few minutes later out came a boat from the Chief Trader, followed by several umiaks.

It was Søren Nielsen, otherwise called "Solo," my old comrade from the Amdrup Expedition. He had a hundred things to ask, but we drowned them all with our one question—"Can we get dogs here?" When he had set our minds at rest on this point we were able to talk of other matters, and do the honours of the ship to our new guests, a boat-load of women. There was my old friend from 1900, Oline, whom I had last seen as a dirty, ragged orphan, now blossomed out into a blushing bride, clean and prettily dressed, and so pleased with all her fine clothes that she kept on showing them off, white kamicks with embroidered fronts, sealskin breeches with strips of coloured

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skin down the sides, and, proudest ornament of all, a red velvet anorak over her white chemise. Oline was indeed a swell, but then she was also an important personage now, being midwife to the settlement. And Oline laughed and chattered and showed her white teeth, and the rest of the women laughed and chattered in chorus; it was evident that they had never seen such fun before.

Fun no doubt it was for them, but not for us. The motor had turned out to be unreliable; we had had no time to clean it, and sharp explosions were heard from time to time, shaking the ship from stem to stern; a cloud of evil-smelling smoke rose from the funnel, making things very uncomfortable for the man at the wheel.

Solo was installed as pilot, and we were soon inside the harbour, where we lay to. As soon as the anchor was down I rowed ashore to find the Chief Trader, Mr. Johan Petersen, and arrange about the purchase of dogs.

As Solo had informed us, there was no difficulty about this, and greatly relieved, I went to call on the native clergyman, Mr. Rossing, while the Eskimos flocked round the ship, and the great news—*i. e.* that we wanted dogs—was eagerly discussed.

That was the 29th of July. We had reached Angmasalik, dogs were to be had, and it was not too late to start for North-east Greenland. We were all naturally in the highest spirits, and almost inclined to join in the joyous howls of the Eskimos, when we next morning started off with Solo in an umiak, and an advance guard of half-a-dozen natives, who heralded our arrival at each new village with a mighty shout: "White men coming to buy dogs, will pay two big moneys each."

At most places, however, the news had got there before us. Word of our arrival, and our business, had in some mysterious way been brought from village to village, so that they were ready to receive us, greeted me as an old



" GRIMIAN "



OUR PILOT

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ESKIMOS IN THEIR KAYAKS



A NATIVE SUMMER CAMP

[To face page 13.]

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acquaintance, and promptly brought forward the most miserable dogs in the place.

Our friends the Eskimos were smart business men who didn't stick at a lie or so, and even when forced to admit that the dogs they showed us didn't look up to much, they still insisted that they were really their finest dogs, and that they would never think of selling anything but first-class dogs to their old friend "Mikki" (my nickname from the Amdrup Expedition).

In spite of all these assurances, however, they were in no way abashed when I flatly refused to believe their tales of the wonderful qualities which these dogs really possessed, in spite of their looks. When I told them that if these were their best dogs, I would rather have their "worst," they were quite willing to sell me these; the winter was a long way off, and until then they had no use for the dogs. Eskimos never look very far ahead of present necessity.

Well, I bought dogs and more dogs, going from one village to another and quite enjoying myself. The weather was fine and warm, the Eskimos pleased to see us—too pleased, sometimes; but when their friendliness became embarrassing we got into the umiak and were rowed up the next place by half-a-score of laughing girls. A swarm of kayaks surrounded us all the way, their numbers increasing at each stopping-place, the men having little boat-races among themselves on the way, or showing off their skill with the spear; laughing and shouting all the time, and making remarks—presumably jokes—for the benefit of the girls who were rowing us, and who doubled up over their paddles at each sally.

It was a merry time. The water foamed round the bow of the umiak, and the kayaks flew light as birds, and almost as swift as the spears which the men flung ahead with sure aim and strong arm. And as we neared the last of the villages, they all dashed ahead, each eager to be first to

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bring the news that " Mikki " was coming to buy dogs, and pay good money for them.

Out on the point all was desolate and lifeless in the burning sunlight. Up came the first of the kayaks with a shout, and in a moment all was life and bustle. A man came running out, stood a moment listening, clapped his hands in astonishment, shouted a reply, and sprang down to the shore to welcome the unexpected guests. Behind him the whole camp was in confusion. This was the only village which had not heard of our arrival, and was thus taken unawares. Men came hurrying down, women after them, but as soon as the latter saw that there were white men approaching, the feminine instinct asserted itself, and they hurried back to put on their finery and make an impression. Aware that their clothes were none too clean, they hastened to get out their Sunday best. It didn't take long—a white chemise was all that was needed, and they didn't even wait to put it on inside their tent—it was all too interesting to miss; they couldn't keep their eyes off what was happening down at the beach. Down they dashed, dressing as they came, waving and fumbling with their arms to get into their finery in a way which must have looked mysterious to the uninitiated. At last they reached us and shook hands, panting, sweating and flushed, but duly arrayed in all their glory.

Civilisation—what a difference it has made ! In the old days when Holm—the first white man to reach Angmasalik—landed on the coast, they didn't trouble so much about appearances.

Then business began. The Eskimos praised their worst dogs up to the skies, while I went on the opposite tack and pointed out all the faults I could find or invent. But the money was not to be sneezed at, we soon came to terms, and business over, we were invited into the finest tent, where the whole population was soon assembled, laughing and chatter-



AN ESKIMO SUMMER CAMP AT ANGMASALIK

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ESKIMOS' BREAK-NECK EVOLUTIONS IN KAYAKS



ESKIMOS' EVOLUTIONS



THE LAST OF THE ESKIMOS. A FELLOW TRYING TO KEEP UP WITH THE SHIP

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ing, while the children stood round sucking their thumbs and shyly contemplating the wonderful strangers.

But the noise, heat, and smell inside the tent were awful, and Jørgensen and I soon bade farewell to our kind hosts and went down to the boat. The Eskimos climbed up on to some rising ground to watch us as we rowed away, the women, always careful of the household linen, took off their clean white chemises again—now that the guests were gone there was no need for finery, their every-day things were good enough for their own circle.

It was late ere we reached the *Alabama*; the women were tired of rowing and had stopped singing, the fleet of kayaks had grown smaller, and every now and then one of them slipped off between the many little islands outside Angmasalik, turning homewards to his tent to bring the news of all that had passed during the day.

It was music in our ears next morning to hear the barking of the dogs—some of the Eskimos had come in with the animals we had bought, and others arrived with more dogs for sale, the crowd being still further increased by a number of natives who had merely come in to see the fun.

Nearly all the Eskimos in the district had collected on some pretext or other; here was a new and unexpected opportunity to meet and exchange news. Some were encamped on shore, others rowed round in kayaks and umiaks, closely examining the ship. Suddenly the whole flotilla turned and made for the beach, the little group on shore broke up, and all was bustle and confusion: it was Solo who had come down to arrange the final settlement of the purchase. Solo was an expert in the matter of dogs, as well as a capable interpreter; he rejected the worthless beasts—there were many of them—and the remainder were brought on board, one or two at a time, their former owners hastening up to the store to get the slip of paper received in payment exchanged for flour, peas, powder,

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needles, and cloth or whatever he and his family most needed.

We had now forty-seven dogs on board—all that were to be had. But the Eskimos showed no inclination to leave, they stayed by the ship all day, on the chance of getting something which might serve their modest needs. We turned on a gramophone for their benefit; it was a great success, and our delighted guests entertained us in return with a series of break-neck evolutions in their kayaks.

We would gladly have stayed longer among our kind and untiring friends, but time was short, the motor had been put to rights, and after thanking Mr. Johan Petersen, my old comrade Søren Nielsen and Pastor Rossing for all their kindness, we went on board, weighed anchor and dipped our flag in a last farewell to those on shore. A faint "hurra" rang out in answer, the Danes of the settlement had turned out to wish us *bon voyage*. The cry was echoed from the farthest point, where some of the Eskimos had pitched their tents. Then we rounded the point and shaped our course for the eastward.

Ahead of us lay a long strip of dazzling white; it was the pack-ice belt, and we hoped from our hearts that it would prove as easy to negotiate as it had been on the way in. The day was fine and clear, and we could see well enough to judge which of the openings looked most promising. After some hesitation we steered for a channel which was sheltered by high icebergs. The channel was good; here and there a strip of ice necessitated careful navigating, and some of the larger icebergs we found it best to give a wide berth, for the sun was strong, water was streaming down the sides of the bergs, and "calvings" were taking place all round us. These icebergs are dangerous in their birth-pangs, sometimes turning right over, and then Heaven help the vessel that happens to be within their reach. We had



FLIRTING WITH AN ESKIMO WOMAN

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THE KAYAKMEN LIDDING GOOD-BYE

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no time to lose, however, and were anxious to make the most of the fair weather, so we kept on our course as nearly as we dared. There was always a certain amount of risk in any case, and as it happened, we got through the ice-belt in a few hours without accident or difficulty.

The decks were in unspeakable confusion. The dogs were tied up where they stood, packed like sardines, and all very hungry; they had been poorly fed all through the summer, but we had bought some big seals for dog-feed, and my companions were busy cutting up the meat ready to serve out to the starving beasts. The noise was a perfect pandemonium. The dogs howled and barked, growling wickedly at each other, and sprang about as far as their chains permitted. We threaded our way as carefully as possible between them, holding great lumps of juicy meat on high, and continually exposed to the attacks of the frantic beasts.

After they had been fed, the dogs lay down to sleep, and for a while all was quiet, until one of them woke, feeling hungry again, and set up a howl, which woke the others, who promptly flung up their heads and howled in chorus. But the noise was good to hear, for it told that the beasts were in good condition.

Soon after we had passed the ice it began to rain, and never stopped until we reached Iceland, on the 4th of August, after five days' incessant downpour. We put on our oilskins and managed to keep ourselves dry, but it cut us to the heart to see our poor beasts standing there without shelter, with the rain pouring over them and mixing with the water on the deck. Lie down on the dripping planks they could not—or would not; there they stood, day after day, sleeping as they stood. After a while they grew expert at this, some of them even learned to make their head do duty as an extra leg, placing their snout on the deck, and then lifting one leg at a time, thus winning a little rest, of a sort. They

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had given up howling now, they had enough to do to try and protect themselves against the merciless rain. As soon as we reached Patricks Fjord, however, they cheered up. One of them scented land and set up a feeble howl, others joined in the song, weakly at first, but in a short time all were sitting up and howling to their hearts' content.

Aagaard, our engineer, had fallen sick, and we were obliged to send him home from Patricks Fjord. We telegraphed at once to Capt. Brockmeyer to see if we could get a volunteer who knew something about engines, from the *Islands Falk*. We had spoken about the matter before, and Capt. Brockmeyer had applied to Capt. Garde, then at the head of the Ministry of Marine, who had agreed to grant leave to assistant-engineer Iversen, and twenty-four hours after the exchange of telegrams we saw the *Islands Falk* entering the fiord. We had plenty to do, for we had our dogs on board, and must reach Greenland in time, so we did not stay long after the *Falk* had arrived. We bade farewell to civilisation at a cosy little dinner with the commanding officer, and then returned on board our own little vessel. We made good speed at the start—*Islands Falk* was going the same way as we, so they towed us all night, taking us round the North Cape, until we separated at twelve noon on the 7th of August.

This was our last link with civilisation; we were bidding farewell to good friends, men who had done all they could to help us in our work and make things pleasant for us—perhaps that was why the parting lay heavy on our minds. There lay *Islands Falk* rocking on the waves a little distance away; the Danish flag waved from stern and masthead, the crew lined the sides, and slowly and solemnly a salute of seven guns boomed out across the water. Our sails were set, we turned northwards, and passed astern of the man-of-war, while a hearty cheer was borne to us on the wind. We dipped our flag, and the two ships parted, *Islands Falk*

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bound for the south, we for the north, for perils and adventures, joys and disappointments—what had the future in store for us ?

The first few days brought nothing but an uneventful cruise, tacking continually against a stiff northerly breeze, or days of calm, with the motor at work. Now and then we sighted ice, but gave it a wide berth—we had no more business with the pack ice yet ; our way lay farther to the north.

By the morning of the 17th of August we were ready for it. Ready—that is to say, we had made our northing, the ice was on our lee, with open water behind it, and channels leading through. But—the wind was blowing half a gale, right on to the ice, with a heavy sea running and the spray dashing over the ice-floes, that ducked and dipped and hacked at each other, crushing and being crushed. It was dangerous to venture into this chaos of broken ice that lifted and fell on the back of the swell ; however, it had to be done. We dared not lose more time by waiting ; moreover, the gale was increasing, and by staying in open water we risked being driven before the storm far away to leeward.

At last I sighted a fairly broad channel ; now or never ! Time after time I opened my lips to give the order, but left the words unspoken—it was a nasty piece of work. The hollow seas ran heavily between the floes, the breakers roared, and the spindrift was flung far over the ice. My comrades stood on deck armed with long poles—they knew what was coming, but showed no signs of doubt or fear—they knew as well as I did, that it must be done—starboard then—and let's get through !

Sea after sea broke over the *Alabama*, the railing was under water half the time, the dogs howled with fear, the wind tore shrieking through the rigging—all was noise and confusion as we dashed with furious speed towards the ice. Now we were in between the two outermost floes : if the

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water fell away from us at the wrong moment we should have the ship astride of the ice-foot. If we were lucky, we might get through—but the luck failed. The thrust of the one, aided perhaps by the draw of the other, sent us over in spite of all our efforts towards a high floe with a nasty ice-foot.

The motor thumped and hammered; Iversen's orders were to give her all the speed he could. I held my breath; another twenty yards and we should be through. But the twenty yards were still to be covered—and now a big sea lifted the *Alabama* bodily; I saw the bluish white of the ice-foot under the starboard side, the water fell away: "Stand fast, lads; she's struck!"

Next moment it seemed as if hell had broken loose; mast and rigging shrieked and sang, the ship itself was groaning and creaking in every fibre, about us the water boiled and foamed, and the sweat poured off us as we toiled to get her free. Foot by foot we edged her off, until we reached a little opening in the ice, and paused to draw breath and look about us. The way was clear to the open sea.

Something attempted, something done, had earned—our dinner at least; we made fast to a big floe which yielded excellent shelter, and while Olsen kept watch on deck we went below to dine. Scarcely had we begun, however, before Olsen came down with the cheerful news that the ice was closing in. In a moment we were all on deck. In the space of a few minutes everything had changed; the swell had gone down a little, the breakers had almost disappeared, but beyond, where before had been open water and heavy sea, was now nothing but ice.

I climbed up into the crow's-nest: there was still time to get clear, but before we were ready to go ahead, the channels closed on every side. The open space about us grew smaller and smaller, we had to shift continually to avoid being nipped by the ice, until at last we lay pinned up in a corner

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between two big floes. We could do nothing but wait and see, and trust to luck to bring us through, but the chances were all against us, and things looked black indeed. Two men kept watch and the rest sat down in the foc'sle, waiting in silence for the next shock.

All night the ice crashed round us; the ship rocked and shivered, pots and pans rattled incessantly in the galley, adding their contribution to the heavier din of the ice against our sides. Every half-hour came the news of water in the hold, but the *Alabama* was staunch and seaworthy, and there was no leak anywhere—that was some comfort, at any rate. Suddenly hurried footsteps sounded on deck—we started up—what was it now? Before I was half-way up the companion ladder came the hail, “All hands on deck”—the ice was churning up round the stern, threatening our rudder and screw.

The worst was over, however, before we came on deck; the ice had caught the rudder and split the stem, but not so badly as to render it useless. That was all the damage done; some ten hours later the wind dropped, the swell disappeared, the fog cleared, and we could once more look about us.

Open water to the north-west—well then, turn out below, and let's get clear of this!

We had a hawser made fast to the jibboom, with four men hauling on it; we turned and twisted the ship, fending off the ice with long poles, and trying every possible means to clear a passage. The motor was set to work, and we used the ship as a wedge, pressing the blocks of ice apart. Every time we came to a piece of open water we had to hang on to the hawser or the bow chains. After six hours' work we had forced our way through about 1000 feet of ice, out into the open water, and began to move easily over the quiet sea.

Our course was north-west, turning aside now and then when we met a strip of ice, which had to be negotiated in the usual way, by twisting and turning to right and left with

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our bowsprit pointing now north, now south. But usually we followed the edges of great ice-fields; for hours we could keep on our course, parallel with these, and in spite of occasional tacking and deviations, we made good progress.

There were seals in the water, we could see their black heads on every side, with their big, beautiful eyes, that looked at once inquisitive and bored. They followed us, swimming round the ship and regarding us from every point of view. But we were dangerous neighbours; seal liver is a dainty dish for men, and the flesh is much appreciated by dogs; we shot at them time after time, without, however, hitting very many. Big graceful gulls floated above and around us—following us inquisitively as the seals; the gulls, however, profited to some extent by the acquaintance, as a good deal of eatable stuff was now and then thrown overboard, and the birds fought shrieking in our wake for bits of meat and offal.

There was life enough up here among the pack ice—life and natural beauty, and splendid colour beyond words, but best of all was the open water, in which we still moved freely.

But we had been working—or at any rate watching—for more than thirty-six hours, and the man at the helm could hardly keep his eyes open. I stood up in the crow's-nest, as sleepy as any of them, only waking to complete consciousness now and then, when I happened to hit my head against the edge.

In one of these more wakeful moments I sighted land ahead: still far away, about sixty miles at least; it was Pendulum Island. I hailed the deck, "Land in sight, come up and look!" and all who could shake off sleep sufficiently climbed into the rigging, overjoyed at our good fortune. But five minutes later we were all as sleepy as ever, and at last I gave the word to make fast to an ice-floe, so that we could get a little sleep.

Only one man kept watch, and all the rest of us turned

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in, as we thought, for a good long sleep—four hours at least; but, alas, we didn't get it. I have a hazy recollection of some one shaking me by the shoulder and saying something about a ship; I seem to remember, also, that I consigned that ship and all on board to regions hotter than the Arctic, but the shaking continued, until I finally awoke and realised that there was a ship in sight.

"A ship?" I exclaimed, astonished, and now thoroughly awake. I jumped out of my berth, thrust my feet into a pair of boots and turned up on deck. Sure enough, a cutter, flying the Norwegian flag, was bearing down on us.

It was the *Hercules*, from Aalesund. She came up alongside and made fast, and the master and owner, Mr. H. Sundt, came aboard, to ask if we had letters for home. Letters—of course we had, but they were not written yet, and we hastened to scribble a few words of greeting. There wasn't time to write much, nor was there much to write about: we were all anxious to talk about the ice, what it was like closer in to land, and our chances of making Danmarks Havn. The Norwegians assured us that we should have no difficulty in getting there, as there was scarcely any ice; we embodied this information in our letters home, and continued our course to the northward, still in open water. Luck was with us all next day, the weather was fine and clear, and all hands in good spirits; there's nothing finer than sailing through pack ice, as long as it's not too close, and the weather holds, but unfortunately both ice and weather are equally changeable.

On the fourth day the change came. At five o'clock in the morning Laub came and reported thick ice ahead. And thick indeed it looked; there was no sign of any lane in the direction we wanted to go, and the sky was yellowish-white with the reflection from the ice. Farther away it looked as if there were water, and we tried to reach it, but the wind came up, we made no headway, and at the

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same time we found ourselves surrounded by young, thin ice, which checked our progress, and finally stopped us altogether.

It took us some time to get clear, and then began a lively game of chevy chase with the ice, which closed in as soon as we fancied we had spied a channel. Thoroughly disgusted with things in general, and unanimously agreeing that ice and the Arctic were hell upon earth, we were at last obliged to make fast. At least a dozen times that night the infernal ice forced us to shift our moorings, and each time we fancied we had found a safe place up came the ice once more. Save for this, the night passed without event, the watches relieved each other, but the ice was still there, thick, motionless, and impenetrable. Not until next morning did the heavy mass begin to move. It was Laub's watch, but the movement came so suddenly that he had no time to rouse me before I was awakened by a frightful crash under the stern. At the same moment a creaking noise was heard along the sides of the ship, and the *Alabama* heeled over. I sprang out of my bunk, and ran full tilt into Laub, who was hastening down to warn me of our danger.

And dangerous indeed it looked. The ice was pressing hard astern, great blocks were lifted up and flung down upon the floes, while our little vessel lay there, stuck fast, right in the way of it. There was nothing to be done, it was impossible to move the ship an inch, and destruction was hurrying down upon us. A shock and a crash, the ship was lifted bodily up, the rudder jammed over, the tiller snapped, and great blocks of ice were forced up under and against the stern.

Had the movement lasted but a couple of minutes more the ship must have been crushed. It ceased, however, as suddenly as it had begun, and all was still once more. The perilous creaking stopped, and we heard nothing but the singing of the wind.



OPEN LANDWATER

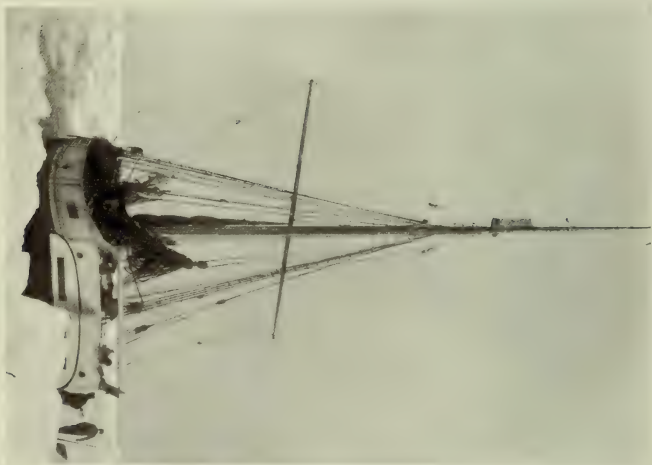


OPEN WATER ONCE MORE

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THE "ALABAMA" BESET IN THE ICE



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NORTHWARD BOUND

However, the position was anything but pleasant : at any moment the ship might be crushed to pieces by the ice. We had got everything ready in case the worst should happen, and now we drifted away to the southward, in towards land, coming nearer and nearer to the south-easterly point of Shannon Island. The open water was quite near, but we were held as in a vice, the ship heeling over, with her stern in the air. We could do nothing but trust to chance and circumstances.

The ship was beset until midnight on the 23rd of August ; then the ice slackened, and the *Alabama* was once more afloat. In spite of the rough handling she had suffered, neither screw nor rudder were damaged. The motor was set going, all was got ready to start, and narrow channels were opening in the ice all round. " Go ahead ! " I shouted from the crow's-nest. " Hard a-starboard ! " The motor gasped, the ship swung round, and in a couple of hours we had made about 300 yards towards the open water. Then we checked again, it was not yet all plain sailing ; we hauled into a bay in an ice-field and waited. A couple of hours later, however, the *Alabama* was again in difficulties, and worse than before—we were lifted about four feet and thrown over on the ice.

We lay there for hours. Petroleum was brought down on to the ice, and the sledges stood ready to carry provisions and equipment from the ship in case the worst should happen, but again the ice fell away, and the *Alabama* found its element once more. This time, however, we did not escape unscathed ; the propeller shaft was bent, and the engines useless. Even if the ice now cleared, we should have to lie there until the shaft was straightened out—that was a job for Iversen and Unger ; the rest of us could go below and sleep. We got but little sleep, however ; the constant alarms had got on all our nerves. Time after time we heard the ice crushing its way along the side, and then it was all

LOST IN THE ARCTIC

hands on deck. Even in the little intervals of peace, when we sat below warming ourselves over a cup of coffee, we started at the slightest sound—what if we went to the bottom! We checked ourselves in the middle of a word to listen—what was coming now? A heavy nipping, or only a little hint to remind us of what might happen? At times we lay on the lockers, fully dressed, even to our boots, and even in our sleep the uncertainty of our position haunted us; the sound of a hasty step overhead was enough to make us start up. Then the ice opened up, and Iversen had got the propeller in working order.

We were now somewhat to the south of Shannon Island, and shaped our course for the north. The wind had shifted, and was now strong in our favour. There was only a narrow fringe of ice to get through, beyond that was open water right in to land. The fringe of ice was thick with heavy floes, and it was dangerous to venture in, but we had grown more careless in our eagerness, and dashed at it, in spite of the creakings and groanings of the ship. Ahead of us there was motion in the ice-fields; two floes were trying to join, and we made all speed to get in between them—a risky thing to do, but it came off, as luck would have it, and by ten o'clock that night we had passed the last obstacle and reached the open water off the coast.

The night was foggy, but we had noticed a little bay ahead, and at two o'clock on the morning of the 25th of August we heard the welcome rattling of the anchor—at last we had reached the coast of Greenland.

We were now on the south-east point of Shannon Island, and would have liked to get a little farther, but we could not resist the temptation to stretch our legs ashore. We found fresh tracks of musk ox everywhere—the place must be a perfect paradise for sportsmen. We saw some eider-duck, and a fox, who sat up a little distance away and stared at the strange visitors; but in spite of all temptations in



MAKING THE HAWSER FAST TO THE ICE

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IDLE HOURS

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NORTHWARD BOUND

the way of game, we were most anxious to get on, and great was our delight when we had climbed a little hill and found open water up along the coast.

The weather was splendid, and added not a little to the spirits of all on board as we sailed up the coast of Shannon Island, the water being almost free from ice. We had so often been disappointed that we no longer dared to hope too much, still less to speak of our hopes, but we were all thinking, "To-morrow we shall sight Cape Bismarck!" It was as well, however, that we did not say too much about it, for the coast water grew narrower and narrower, great floes came drifting down, until at last all further progress was impossible. For an hour we lay motionless, staring at the ice, which lay there, an unchanging, dazzling expanse of white as far as eye could see. Then we bore away to the south, and anchored soon after in a little bay near Cape Suci. The *Alabama* had made her last voyage, but none among us dreamed that the old ship had met her death-blow out there in the pack ice.

As soon as the anchor was down we went up into the hills to have another look at the ice. It didn't look promising: closely packed between Shannon and Koldeway Island; but there was a bit of a breeze from the south, which might give us open water. It did not, however, and two days later, on the 27th of August, we hauled the *Alabama* in to land and moored her safely. We were not going to let her break adrift in the first gale, and as far as that went, we were not disappointed. Mighty storms have raged since then over the old *Alabama*, but she never moved, and there she lies to this day in our old winter haven, a sorry wreck, but all that remains of the good ship which bore us and our hopes up to the eternal ice.

CHAPTER II

THE JOURNEY TO LAMBERT'S LAND

Difficult sledging—Young ice—Adrift on thin ice—The sledge in the water—Along the coast of Koldeway Island—The dogs exhausted—Reach Danmarks Havn—Northward again—Good-bye to the sun—Over the inland ice—Clefts in the ice—Reach Lambert's Land—Find Brönlund's body—The search for Mylius Erichsen and Høeg Hagen—Start for the ship—Continual gales—Darkness—Short of provisions—Reach Danmarks Havn—Lieut. Jørgensen frost-bitten—Death of the dogs—A toilsome journey—The ship at last.

A MONTH has passed since we reached Shannon Island; the sun is lower in the heavens, and the water is covered with ice. A month ago we could still sail, now the weather is just right for sledging. The period of enforced inaction is over, and we are ready to start off again with the dog-sledge. We are to start to-morrow, the 25th of September: the sledges are loaded up on the ice alongside the ship, the dogs have been divided, and the teams are ready. One more day of luxurious loafing on board, and then our new journey begins.

But to-day we eat, drink and enjoy, leaving the morrow to look after itself. Unger has made a cake, which no confectioner need be ashamed of, and we are making merry with all sorts of good things routed out from our stores. We are celebrating a double event, Laub's birthday party, and a final banquet for those who are about to start for Lambert's Land.



SLACK ICE OFF THE COAST OF SHANNON ISLAND



STRANDED ICEBERGS



ANOTHER SPECIMEN OF ICEBERG

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THE JOURNEY TO LAMBERT'S LAND

The good folks at home, who had prophesied indigestion and various other ills as a result of our having no cook on board, would be surprised if they could see the dishes which deck our festive board; pork chops and turtle soup—prepared originally, indeed, at the “Danica” factory—but we have at least warmed them up! And then the cake aforementioned, besides wine and cigars and other good things—no one would think we were in Greenland!

At least, not as long as we sit still and eat in silence, but the first words spoken betray our whereabouts, for we are talking game. Jørgensen and I had seen a musk ox the same day, but unfortunately, the beast had also sighted us, and was off at full speed, which is saying a good deal, for a musk ox going at a run can more than tire a man. We had only one gun with us—I had taken a camera instead, which was not of much use in the present instance, so I sat down on a stone to watch the progress of the chase.

Away went the musk ox, with Jørgensen in its wake, running as he had probably never run before, but it is no light matter to run a musk ox down, and Jørgensen had to give it up at last. We could only say that we had seen a musk ox, but that was enough: the sporting instinct was awakened, and our companions' eyes said plainly, “Wait till you're gone; *we'll* do some musk ox shooting!” Well, we hoped they might, we should be glad of some fresh meat when we came back for the winter.

When we come back—but that day lies a long way off, with many a hard day's work between, and many a weary mile. The talk veers round to the future; tent life, and sledging and driving dogs, and my companions, who have never tried it before, are looking forward to it all. So am I, for that matter, but still, it's good to have one more day in a warm cabin with decent food before starting out to cold tent and pemmican. And, after all, variety is the spice of life.

LOST IN THE ARCTIC

All goes well at the start, the dogs dash ahead at full speed, wild with joy, howling and barking and snapping at each other, all from pure excess of high spirits. The noise and excitement encourage the weaker dogs to fresh exertions, but they can't keep up the pace, so we take them on the sledges, and tear away over the level, newly-frozen ice. It bends and cracks beneath the weight of the sledges. Once a sledge almost goes through, but nothing checks our speed, and we reach the spot where we are to leave the frozen water for the frozen land. The pleasure trip is over, and the real work begins.

We have a small trolley with us for the land transport of the heavily-laden sledges, it is hard work both for dogs and men, but the novelty of the things has not yet worn off, and all seem to find it great fun—until evening comes and the tent is pitched: then we discover that we are stiff and sore and aching in every limb. There are three of us: Jørgensen, Iversen and myself, each with one sledge, Laub and Olsen have come to help us a little on our way. I drive the foremost sledge, it is only a small one, and not very heavy, but then I have only three dogs, Jørgen, Bastard, and a little liver-and-white bitch, which I hope to train up to take the post of leader. She is Jørgen's sweetheart, and one must admire his taste, for she is a beautiful beast, with splendid brown eyes. She is clever and willing too, but nervous, and has to be driven with kindness and gentle words, and not with whipping and scolding. This little beauty I have called "Girly," and in a couple of days she has learned so much that I can drive her by word of mouth: "Gee!" and she turns to the right, "Haw" and she goes to the left, "Mush" and she knows it means straight ahead. Girly is a good dog, and I get to like her more and more every day.

We make good progress on the whole, but it is too early in the season to expect good going underfoot, and we have



OUR DOGS ROAMING OVER THE LAND

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THE "ALABAMA" IN WINTER HARBOUR AT SHANNON ISLAND



VIEW EASTWARD FROM THE WINTER HARBOUR

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A BOAT ARRIVING WITH FOOD FOR THE DOGS



THE SLEDGE ON WHEELS

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LANDING THE DOGS



LANDING THE DOGS

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THE JOURNEY TO LAMBERT'S LAND

to reckon with various difficulties which would be avoided later in the year. No snow has fallen as yet, and young ice and old ice alternate continually. We have to lift the sledges, often two or three feet, up on to the old ice, and let them down with a bump when we come to the young ice again. A month hence the drifting snow will have rounded off the edges into nice level slopes, making easy going where we now are forced to drag and heave, all hands at one sledge.

Far worse than the lack of snow, however, is the uncertain ice. There are stretches where young ice and old ice have frozen together, broken up and frozen together again, making a frightful chaos of heavy old ice-blocks with thin, young ice piled up between, water hidden by a thin coating of ice, and slush that looks safe enough to the eye, but will not bear the weight of a dog. We are in constant danger of going through the treacherous covering of ice, and that means a nasty ducking. I am the first, we have just reached the edge of a big old floe, and have now to get down on to the young ice again, but it's as well to take a look at it first. Without a thought of danger I step out on to a piece of ice that looks perfectly safe; suddenly I feel it giving under me, the ice breaks up all round, and I have barely time to fling my field-glass back on to the solid ice behind me before I go through with a shout. Jørgensen hauls me out, fortunately unhurt, but it is anything but pleasant to run about in dripping clothes while dry things are being unpacked. And then changing in ten degrees of frost, with a stiff breeze—but it has to be done, and soon we are ready to go on again.

The stretches of young ice grow larger, as we get farther away from land, the old floes disappear almost entirely, and there are apparently endless belts of young ice to be crossed.

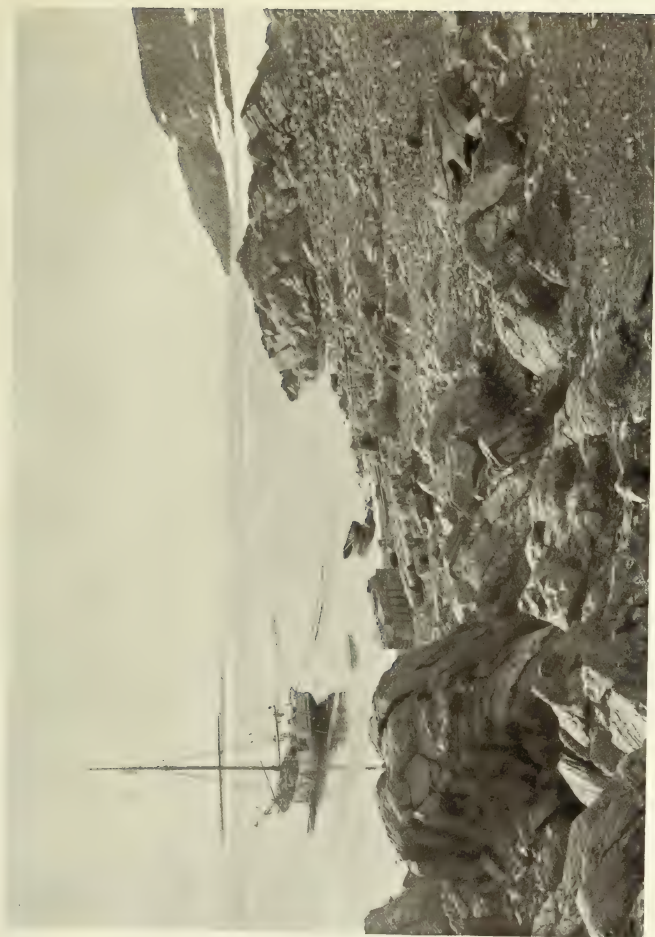
It is good going over the young ice, which is still smooth

LOST IN THE ARCTIC

as glass, the dogs seem to think it splendid fun, but we are not so enthusiastic. A fresh breeze is blowing, and the ice may break up any minute, but fortune favours the bold, and we get across all right, but it needs careful going. The ice is not everywhere of the same thickness, and even at its best is none too thick. To halt would be fatal, unless we can find a spot where two sheets of young ice lie piled one on top of the other, making a fairly safe resting-place, and two of us go on ahead to find a spot for our next halt. We must do all we can to reach firm ground before dark: it is an exciting stage of the journey. Now we are driving over ice so thin that we can feel it bend under the weight of the sledge, now we have only a couple of feet between us and the open water, but there's no help for it, we are in for it now, and must keep on until we find an old floe. To our great delight we sight one at last, and soon all the sledges are drawn up on firm ice where we can pitch our tents and sleep in safety.

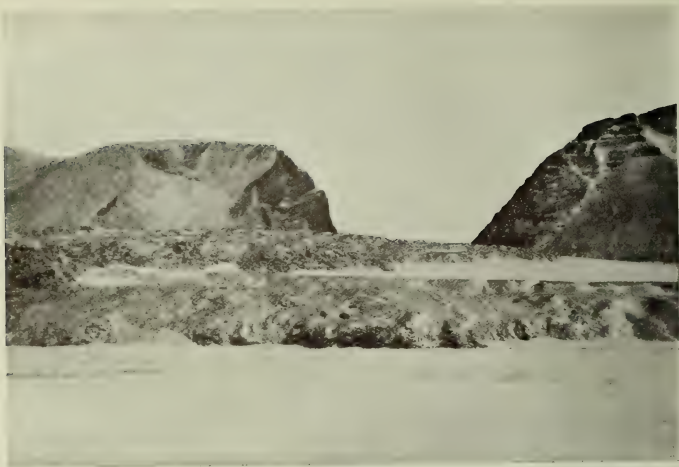
Laub and Olsen keep with us until noon on the 1st of October, when all further progress is checked by open water, stretching away as far as eye can see. There is no knowing how long we may have to remain here; the others must turn back, we dare not keep them any longer.

So we bid farewell to our two companions, after having commandeered as much of their stock of provisions as they can possibly spare, and Laub and Olsen start off again southwards, while we pitch our tent and look dismally out towards the north, over the endless expanse of open sea. There are any amount of narwhals about, playing carelessly in the water, entirely heedless of our presence, nor do they seem at all put out by our attempts to increase our stock of dog-feed at their expense. It is easy enough to hit them, but the bullets do not seem to take any effect, and as we cannot afford to waste our cartridges we give it up, and content ourselves with watching the creatures happily



THE "ALABAMA" LAST HARBOUR

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KOLDEWAY ISLAND



HEAVY ICE ALONG THE COAST

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THE JOURNEY TO LAMBERT'S LAND

at play, little dreaming that the water of their playground will soon be covered with ice.

It is dull work doing nothing; Jørgensen and I go off eastward to a big iceberg, whence we can get a good view of our surroundings, and discover to our delight that the open water which has checked our progress is bounded on the east by ice, so that we can make a start again.

The journey now proves more difficult than we imagined. The weather is fair at the start, but soon the eternal north wind comes up again. We make good progress, however, over the wide expanse of young ice, dashing ahead as fast as the dogs can go, the wind growing stronger every minute. Heavy clouds begin to bank up in the sky, and the snow is beginning to drift. The ice still holds, but at any moment it may begin to break up, and we keep an anxious look-out for an old floe to serve as a camping-place. It soon becomes apparent that the danger is imminent, away to the north-east a crack appears in the ice, it widens and stretches away to the west, right athwart our course. Hastily we turn and make at full speed for the land: we can hear the creaking of the ice around us, and cracks appear on all sides. We whip up the dogs—it is neck or nothing now. No time to try if the ice in front is safe; if it holds, well and good, if not. . . . Nearer and nearer the fatal cracks appear, and soon we are surrounded on all sides. Our original course is forgotten, we are flying to the south-east, away from the widening lanes and the water.

Ah! I spy the top of an old floe right ahead. It is in the nick of time, for it is growing dark, and the dogs are nearly spent.

Suddenly I feel the ice giving under me, a shout of warning to my comrades, and I am safely over, but Jørgensen cannot check himself in time, and a moment after his sledge is in the water. The lashings are cut, and the load hauled up on to the still uncertain ice, the sledge is sinking

LOST IN THE ARCTIC

slowly, but lightened as it is there is just a chance of saving it, we haul like men possessed, and up it comes at last. We load up again, Iversen's sledge is brought over without mishap, and we continue our flight, a race for life against the water and the dark.

Half-an-hour later and the race is won, the sledges are drawn up on to the floe which I had seen ahead of us. A good camping-place is found in a little ice-valley, safe and sheltered, the ice-hills around serving to keep off the wind. Here we are, and here we have to stay for two whole days, for the gale increases, and the driving snow makes it impossible to move.

At last, as the gale shows no signs of abating, we decide to start in spite of it. Reach land we must, get in to Koldeway Island and follow the coast northwards, it would be madness to attempt to continue our journey across the open sea. The land is not far away, five or six miles at the outside, but it is hard work with the wind blowing a gale, and the driving snow shutting in the view so that at times we cannot see more than fifty yards ahead. It is hard enough out on the young ice, where we can neither hear nor see, but had we foreseen the difficulties we were to encounter close in to land, we should have preferred to stay out in the sheltered valley of ice. Close in to the coast all is confusion, the ice is piling up, and we have to jump from floe to floe, or wait until two pieces meet, crushing all the smaller lumps of ice into a treacherous moving mass, across which it is just possible to rush a sledge, with anxious, careful speed. Time after time this perilous manœuvre is repeated, until we reach the land, overjoyed at finding ourselves safe, and vowing never again to venture out from the coast.

Alas, for all our promises! Close in to land, the ice cracks constantly with the tide, rendering sledging difficult, and very soon our rash vow is forgotten, and we are once

THE JOURNEY TO LAMBERT'S LAND

more out on the wide stretch of young ice. For a day or two all goes well, and our good fortune makes us over-bold, as is often the case on sledge expeditions. But we are very soon forcibly reminded of the fact that we are at the mercy of the elements, and three days after reaching land at the southern point of Koldeway Island, we are again shipwrecked on thin and broken ice.

There is a strong wind blowing, and cracks appear in the ice, opening out swiftly into broad lanes. In a quarter of an hour we are surrounded, and adrift on a tiny raft of thin ice, but by good fortune the gale drives us up against an older and more solid floe. As we reach it, we whip up the dogs and dash across, but the ice is twisting and piling up under us, lifting and falling, cracking and shivering. The two floes are crushed close together for a minute or so, and then drift apart, but by this time we are over and off again, regardless now of nature's duels and the fate of the floe that a moment ago meant safety or destruction to ourselves. We have our work cut out as it is—land, land! is our cry, the storm aids us, for the wind is at our backs, we ply the whip unceasingly, toiling ourselves till the sweat pours down our faces. We reach the land, and follow the coast for an hour, only to find ourselves once more adrift. This time it is no fault of ours, five hundred yards from the coast the ice suddenly opens between us and the land—we curse our luck, in trouble once again!

It might have been worse, however; fortunately we are near an old floe, on which we can safely camp. One side of it is frozen fast in the young ice, the other is washed by the water. For the first and only time on all my sledge expeditions we stand watch at night. We are adrift. It begins during Iversen's watch, he discovers it by noticing that the tent, which to begin with had faced to the north, has now swung round to the west. We can do nothing, however, but submit to our fate, and hope for the gale to abate.

LOST IN THE ARCTIC

But the storm still rages, and for twenty-four hours we lie there surrounded by water on all sides. Then the wind drops, the frost bridges over the open water, and we can continue on our way, but it takes us over half a day to regain the ground lost by our drifting in the gale.

To our astonishment the dogs now begin to show signs of disease or exhaustion. We have been feeding them on dried fish, but this appears to be insufficient in point of nourishment, and it is evident that the beasts must have a change of diet, if we are to keep them alive and carry out our plans. It is impossible, however, to find any other food for them out here; we must wait until we reach Danmarks Havn, and then—dare we use our own provisions for dog food? We discuss the question at length, and come to the conclusion that there is nothing else to be done, as the whole fate of the expedition is dependent on it. Give up we will not; the provisions must be sacrificed, but the situation is anything but cheerful, one dog being already dead and several others nearly so.

We must make all possible haste to reach Danmarks Havn, and fortunately fate is kinder to us now than at first. The young ice is safer, the weather calm, and luck, which means so much on a sledging expedition, is with us at last. On the 11th of October, after a journey of sixteen days, we reach our first objective.

At Danmarks Havn we are obliged to remain until the 15th of October, the dogs must be rested and fed, provisions weighed and packed, and all this takes time. At last we are ready to start, the dogs in fine condition after their rest. We are glad to get away again, for the season is already far advanced and we are a long way behindhand, but never mind; with luck we can yet win through. Hope is a splendid tonic, and with good ice and fair weather we can easily make up for lost time.

We make good progress up along the low, monotonous



IN FULL ARCTIC DRESS



THE HUT IN DANMARKS HAVN

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THE DOGS FLOCKING ROUND THE FEEDER



SLEDGING ACROSS COUNTRY

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THE JOURNEY TO LAMBERT'S LAND

coast from 17 Kilometer Næsset to Cape Marie Valdemar. This stretch is covered in two days, for the ice is splendid, level and free from snow, only a slight obstacle here and there, scarcely enough to add a spice of interest to the long day's journey. But if the ice is perfect, the same cannot be said of the weather. A strong wind is blowing, and the driving snow makes it difficult to find our way between the grounded icebergs.

We relieve our feelings occasionally by cursing the wind, but time is short and our journey long, and we comfort ourselves with the hope that the weather soon may change. Unfortunately, however, we are in for a stormy time. The wind, instead of abating, increases, and it is soon blowing a gale, and next day, off the mouth of the Skærfjord, we get the full force of it. This is something like a storm, and to make matters worse, the ice is about as bad as can be. The sledges crawl over great, hilly floes, the tops of the hills are bare, but the valleys are full of deep, soft snow. We sink into it, often to half-way up our thighs, the sledges are running on their bottom-boards, and the dogs flounder helplessly in the loose snow. We have to haul the sledges ourselves, and haul we do with a will, toiling like horses, panting and groaning, with the sweat pouring down our faces, in spite of the cold, and freezing in hair and beard. It is a job for all hands to drag a sledge through the soft snow, we use the whip when necessary without mercy, and join in fluently cursing the eternal obstructions in our way. But at the end of four or five hours we have only made two miles, and angry with the weather and general difficulties, we pitch our tent early, and let the storm do its worst. Inside the tent we are comfortable enough; the snow piles up outside and gives us additional warmth, we mend our clothes and cook a meal for the dogs, a dainty mixture of oatmeal, butter and fish, which sends the dogs wild with delight.

LOST IN THE ARCTIC

Autumn is a bad time for sledging, and the autumn of 1909 is no exception to the rule. The bad weather continues for a couple of days more, it is snowing and blowing, now a gale, now a fresh breeze; the wind being for the most part too strong for sledge-work, but not strong enough to keep us in our tent. If only it would blow so hard that sledging was impossible we should know what to do, but as it is, we fling down our hauling-straps one moment and swear we'll give it up, then the wind drops a little, it is not bad enough to pitch camp, and sulkily we take up our straps once more and bend to the work. The whip whistles over the dogs, the beasts get up howling and off we go again, the wind nipping nose and cheeks till they are frozen white. And soon the wind has again risen to a gale.

On the 20th of October we laid down our first depot on some rocks off Orleans Island, lightening our sledges by 135 pounds: a noticeable difference, especially as the weather is getting better, and it is good going once more. But there is no end to the trials and troubles of a sledge trip, and now, when the wind and the snow have left us alone for a while, we discover, as Jørgensen says, that we have "lost" ourselves. We have lost our way somewhere among the innumerable small islands of Jökel Bay, and cannot say for certain where we are. One thing is certain, our way lies to the north, and no doubt we shall find out where we are sooner or later. What is of more importance is, that the dogs are beginning to lose strength again, Iversen's leader, "the Old 'un," is dead; the faithful beast has literally worked till he dropped, and our biggest dog, "Bruin," is at the point of death. He is a heavy feeder, and needs more than his pound of food per day, but more we cannot afford to give him. He dies too, at last, and is cut up and given to the other dogs. Most of them are glad enough to get the meat, but one or two with finer feelings, Girly, for instance, decline to eat such food, and turn up their noses

THE JOURNEY TO LAMBERT'S LAND

scornfully at it. In Girly's case, however, it is perhaps not so much a question of the finer feelings, as of stomach trouble, for Girly has developed bad habits, in particular a remarkable but insatiable appetite for traces and harness, and this morning she has eaten all she could get hold of. Then she attacked my sledge—so my companions say; I insist that it must have been Jørgen, for Girly is too much of a lady to steal—and found some chocolate, which the pair of them devoured, four and a half pounds of it, with paper and tinfoil and all, which is bad for the inside. Alas, Girly, it is not always easy to be virtuous, but retribution follows those who tread the path of vice—beatings and stomach-ache, and other ills.

We cannot say we have been particularly lucky this trip. The going is bad, the snow is not yet hard enough to bear, and as soon as we leave the coast it gets worse; the old ice being only just hidden by a thin layer of snow, under which lurk all sorts of hidden perils. There are deep holes, little pitfalls, which let one through a foot or more at the slightest touch. It is a marvel that we have had no broken legs, but we sprain our ankles, bruise and scrape our skins, constantly stumbling and falling, and swearing like troopers. It is all the fault of these holes, which also prevent us from helping the dogs as much as we otherwise could, having quite enough to do to look after ourselves, so the dogs have to do all the pulling. They manage it all right, but it takes it out of them a good deal. Poor beasts! It is sometimes almost impossible to make them go forward. We hope soon to be able to lie up for a day, and give the dogs a rest and hot food—it would do them a world of good.

It would almost seem as if our prayers were heard, for on the morning of the 25th of October we are awakened by the howling of the wind, and the snow thrashing against the tent. At last! We rub our hands together and curl up comfortably in our warm sleeping bags, turn over and go

LOST IN THE ARCTIC

to sleep again. But the wind is in a teasing mood—blowing a gale at night, and calm again next morning. There is no longer any excuse for lying idle, we prepare our meal, and crawl out of the tent. Off we start, but we have not gone far before the storm is upon us once more, hiding earth and sky from view. It grows unbearable at last, the snow finds out every hole in our furs, the cold is awful, and five minutes after the gale has struck us we are pitching our tent again. It is a two hours' job, but it holds, holds for two days, the storm shrieking about us all the time. But it clears the air, and when at last we are able to start off again, the air is fine and clear, but the gale has "blown the sun down," we shall not see it again until February. It is as if we had lost a dear friend; we look for it at noon, even making a long halt, to see if it should show once more above the horizon, but in vain. The sky is reddish-gold, the highest peaks catch for a moment the last rays of the sun that still can reach them; then the splendid colour fades, and we know we have seen the last of it for three and a half months.

Well, we can get along without it, the moon is full, and that helps us a great deal. There is no need to be down-hearted, off we go again; not daring now to waste a minute of the precious light.

On goes our little caravan, still heading for the north. We build our second depot, and trail away over the inland ice, still northward, up towards the dark. The days are shortening rapidly; we start in the dark, and do not halt until daylight has vanished for some hours, finding the last of our way by the light of the moon that shines over the desolate land. Still northward, now over the inland ice, where the going is good although hilly, for the hills are long, even slopes, which do not trouble us. It is the best going we have had for a long time, and it grows still better as we pass Schnauder's Island, where we keep close in to the coast. Then it stops, and from there to Lambert's

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SINISTER CLIFFS OF LAMBERT'S LAND



THE LAST RAYS OF THE SUN

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SLEDGING OVER A WIDE EXPANSE OF NEW ICE



ONE OF OUR MOST COMFORTABLE CAMPING-PLACES

[To face page 41.]

THE JOURNEY TO LAMBERT'S LAND

Land, the dark and sinister cliffs of which we have sighted a couple of days earlier, progress is almost impossible.

Up and down we go, making long detours where the inland ice has piled itself up, and jumping over cracks and crevasses not very deep, but deep enough to be dangerous if one fell in. Our greatest difficulty is the bad light: we cannot see far enough ahead to avoid the worst pressure ridges, just when we think we are on level ground, the dogs fall into a hole or try to climb over an almost perpendicular wall of ice. There are no shadows, and we drive at hazard over a miniature alpine landscape. Now and then the dogs fall into a fissure, generally the traces hold, but occasionally the weight of the fall breaks them. Then the dog has to be hauled out again; often a matter of some difficulty. On one occasion I had to let myself be lowered down, as the dog had not sense enough to climb up by itself. It was "Pan"—and he is not very sharp; he seemed to think it was very comfortable down there, thirty or forty feet below the surface until I appeared on the scene, and managed to persuade him to come out.

The ice is at its worst to the north of the island, and gradually as we approach Lambert's Land, it gets better, the rises become longer, the cracks fewer, and the snow less deep. But it is anything but good going; until the 30th of October, when we reach a narrow lane of land-ice off the coast of Lambert's Land.

With my light sledge I am able to move faster than my companions, and leave them now, hurrying on ahead to find the depot before it grows dark. It is some time before I discover it, as I have no idea as to its whereabouts, and am obliged to explore each little cape and point.

At last I notice a number of fox tracks, all leading up on to the land, and follow these, as the depot cannot be far away. After some time I find it, a lot of empty cans behind a big stone, several full tins of preserve, pemmican, peas

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and corned beef, some fragments of wood, and a "Lux" apparatus without feet. This must evidently be the depot, so I take my sledge round the point, ready to camp a little distance away. My companions arrive on the scene, and on closer examination we find a hole in the snow, more fragments of wood half-buried, and some reindeer hair. There is now no possibility of doubt, here it was that Brönlund fought his last heroic fight with the dark and the cold, and sank at last, unable to go farther with his frozen feet.

It is a place of ill omen. The wind whistles mournfully round a jutting rock—awful indeed must his last days have been in this desolate spot, unprotected against the cold and the storm. I will not attempt to describe our feelings when at last we discovered the body, moving aside with reverent hands the kindly snow that hid the pitiful remains of a modest hero. Poor Brönlund; the last time I had seen him was several years before at the Café à Porta, where he came down to ask if I would take him with me to Alaska. What must he not have gone through since then! First the summer with his companions at Danmarks Fjord, a time of hunger and misery, then the long journey back, with little or no hope of reaching safety, his comrades dying or dead, and to crown all, his last lonely journey to the depot, that his comrades lives should not be sacrificed to no purpose.

Poor Brönlund! If I had but taken him with me to Alaska, he would not have met this wretched fate, and yet—we must all die once, and he could scarcely have died a nobler death.

Next morning Jørgensen and I explore the depot, and examine Brönlund's pockets, but Koch had found all there was to find, and beyond a book with a couple of sketches of Mylius Erichsen and Høeg Hagen, and a single drawing from Danmarks Havn, we find nothing new; only a few implements and a couple of cartridges. Our last duty is



AN ICY DRINK



A HAND-SLEDGE OVER GLARE-ICE

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THE JOURNEY TO LAMBERT'S LAND

to give him decent burial, we collect a lot of big stones and make a grave, which will stand for many, many years. Then sadly and silently we leave the mournful spot, and start off northward again to find the bodies of Mylius Erichsen and Hagen.

We are delayed a good deal by dark and difficult weather, and not until the 3rd of November do we reach the spot we have been seeking. Iversen stays by the tent, while we other two go off on our search, soon to realise, however, that our efforts must prove fruitless, at any rate if their camp has been on the sea-ice, which Brönlund's note "in the middle of the fiord, in front of glacier" seems to indicate. Jørgensen goes north-west towards a point which the three men must certainly have passed. I keep straight to the west in order to reach land and follow the coast. It is useless to search the sea-ice, which has been broken up the year before, as is clearly shown by the sharp fragments which cannot possibly have lain there all the summer. I explore the country thoroughly, however, but without finding the slightest trace of Mylius Erichsen's camp, and returning to the tent many hours later, I meet Jørgensen, whose search has proved equally fruitless. Had they camped on land, we could not have missed seeing the camp, or remains of it, but if they pitched their tent out on the ice, which is most likely, all traces of it must long ago have disappeared. Next day we go to northward of the camp to see if we can find anything before the big glacier between Lambert's Land and Hovgaard's Island, but here also has been open water the previous summer and our search is in vain.

We have been here for three days now. It is the 4th of November, and it is high time to think about getting back, for the daylight is rapidly growing less, the moon has almost disappeared, and our provisions also have considerably decreased. Worst of all, we are short of

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petroleum, the can has leaked, and the precious drops have been spilt on the way, there is now scarcely enough for three days' cooking. We can do no more here, best to start off again, southward, towards the light, with all the speed we can.

Once more we visit Brönlund's burial-place, and on the grave I lay a wreath and a winding-sheet—the first from Høeg Hagen's parents, the second from Mrs. Mylius Erichsen. This we thought would best meet the wishes of the givers, since we had not found those for whom the tributes were intended, and Brönlund had been an exceptionally good comrade. Then we left Lambert's Land behind us, with its mournful memories. Out we start, moving in the darkness, for we know that the ice is good a little way from land, and we must take our road as we find it, for the daylight lasts but a few hours now, and we have over 250 miles between us and home.

The first day's sledging, however, does not amount to much. The weather is oppressive and threateningly calm, over us hangs a thick and heavy bank of clouds, which look as if they touched the earth; from time to time a single snowflake falls. Then to make matters worse it grows foggy, and the faint daylight which we have had hitherto, disappears almost entirely, and it is impossible to see the nature of the surface even a few yards ahead. We stumble on through the fog and the dark, not knowing if our road goes up or down, or lies flat and level before us; southward, southward, that is all we know or care.

Now we are on the inland ice once more, and progress is almost impossible, but we still hope that the fog will lift so that we can see our way. The fog grows thicker, however; it is snowing hard, and the wind is getting up. Soon the driving snow makes it impossible to see, and tired of steering at random, weary of rushing down into deep valleys and wasting precious time getting out again, we pitch our



OUR TEAM THINNING OUT



COMING BACK TO THE "ALABAMA"

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THE FIREPLACE OF THE LATE MYLIUS ERICHSEN



THE CAIRN OF MYLIUS ERICHSEN

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tent—better to lose a day than keep on in this fashion. And very soon we are glad we did so, for it is blowing a gale, and the storm lasts for two whole days.

By the end of this time it has grown appreciably darker, and the sky is overcast. The darkness has come more rapidly than I had expected, and the days are now uncomfortably short—if indeed one can call this little span of twilight “day.”

But we must make the most of it, we start early, striking our tent by the light of a small lantern, and fumbling about in the dark, until at last we are ready to move off, steering by the stars, without heeding the hills and valleys, which we could not see in any case.

The day after the storm everything goes wrong to begin with. I am sitting in the tent, packing up the cooking-apparatus, when I hear Iversen exclaim: “Well, of all the cursed brutes! Hang me if Max hasn’t eaten ‘Devil’!” Then follows the howling of a dog, and Iversen’s angry voice again, and I rush out to see what is going on. I know the dogs are hungry, but tearing a smaller dog to pieces and eating him is something new, and anything but pleasant. Well. “Devil” was not much use, so it doesn’t matter so very much, but it might be a valuable dog next time. Max, however, the bloodstained murderer, will never do it again, he has eaten too much, probably swallowed the liver too, and a couple of hours later he is dead.

This happened at twelve o’clock. An hour later “Gine” dies. This is the third, quite enough, one would think, for a single day, but at half-past two “Klaus” falls; we pick him up and lay him on a sledge, but to no avail, and soon he too is dead. Four dogs in one day—this is thinning our ranks with a vengeance.

Up to now we have always been glad to pitch our tent and crawl into our warm sleeping bags, now, however, they are almost regarded as instruments of torture. In the

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evening they are frozen stiff, and it is a hard job to get down into them. We have to open them out, breaking the ice with our bodies, and when we have lain in them a quarter of an hour or so, it begins to melt. Drip, drip, the water falls on our bodies, and we get an icy shock at every change of position, when we find ourselves lying in water that has not yet been warmed by the heat of the body. At last, when all the water in the bag is warmed, and we are lying in a kind of vapour bath, we begin to feel more or less comfortable, but it is anything but pleasant coming out next morning into the cold with our wet clothes.

And then to be short of petroleum—we have just about enough for a couple of dishes of pemmican, but we have had to give up making tea, and when, as happened last night, the last man to enter the tent forgets to shut the door, one is inclined to agree with the people who say that sledging and camping out are a hell upon earth. Jørgensen is the culprit, and he meets with his due reward. It is blowing hard outside, and the driving snow gets in through the open door, covering Jørgensen completely, but without touching Iversen or myself. Great is our delight, when early in the morning we give up further attempts at sleep, and light the candle, to see what had happened. At the same moment we hear Jørgensen's voice from the depths of his sleeping bag: "Confound this rime—it's as thick as snow!" with which observation we thoroughly agree. The surprising thing is, that we can hear him at all, for he is completely buried in a snow-drift, and pays for his carelessness with a quart or so of water in his sleeping bag.

The days pass, and if we are not making very great progress, we are yet getting gradually nearer to our northernmost depot. We are striving all we can to reach it, for we have not a drop of petroleum left, nor a crumb of bread. It does not look as if we should ever get there, for whichever way we turn the land seems still as far off as ever. Night

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falls about three o'clock, by four o'clock no land is in sight, still we keep on, steering by the stars, and at last, at five o'clock, we sight land dead ahead. Now it approaches with giant strides, and stumbling along among the pressure ridges we reach the depot at last.

Then we feast and make merry, the stove is kept going, we drink tea and eat baked biscuits. Life is once more worth living—after the sleeping bags have thawed.

In spite of the shortness of the days, we travel faster now than on the way up, the snow is better, and we have the wind at our backs. If it is not too strong, we start, hoping that it will drop before—nightfall, I was about to say, but alas, the darkness compels us to pitch our tent at three o'clock, which can scarcely be called night. Our renewed supplies of food and fuel go a long way towards keeping up our spirits, and we have enough and to spare by the time we reach the next depot. From this point onwards we have more than we really need, for luck is with us, and the homeward journey is infinitely easier than the journey out. On the 21st of November we pass 17 Kilometer Næssset once more, and next day we reach Danmarks Havn.

It is splendid to find ourselves once more in a clean, warm, well-lighted shelter, with a cup of hot coffee, and best of all, to pull off our wet clothes and creep into dry sleeping bags—absolutely content, we ask no more. We are to stay here three days—it is now about as dark as it can be, and the dogs are sorely in need of food and rest, especially the former. Twice a day we cook a meal for our faithful animals, and we can soon see what a difference it makes. The dogs grow fat, their tails curl upwards, and their eyes regain something of their old brightness. But it means work for us, it takes two hours to cook a meal, both morning and evening, apart from the time it takes to feed them. The feeding is almost the worst part of it, for this cannot be done out of doors, we have to have

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them into the house, two or three at a time, and as long as a sledge dog is not actually starving, he will fight with his companions, which makes it difficult to keep order. But we get used to it after a time; unfortunately, however, the three days are now gone, and we must be off again. But it is snowing hard, and very windy, well, we will stay one day more. The one more day becomes two—three—four, and here we are still, for the wind and the snow make it impossible to see anything at all. It is very pleasant to stay here in shelter—but how are we to get back?

Six days pass before it is possible to start. And the days have become uncomfortably short. There is no moon, we must get along as best we can in the faint daylight, but how is it to be done—how much longer will the journey last?

On the 2nd of December we make a start. The snow is lying deep and soft. We sink in up to our knees, and we have no snow-shoes. These we have left behind at the depot, and now we must take the consequences of our carelessness, and wade through as best we can. The first part of the journey is rich in misfortunes, Jørgensen has got both his feet frost-bitten, doubtless due to the fact that his kamicks have grown so small from constant drying, that there is scarcely room for sedge-grass in them. If only we had hard going underfoot it would not have been so bad, but it is cold marching in deep snow and we all feel the cold more than usual. For two days we are obliged to halt on account of the gales, then the weather clears, and we can go on again, but luck is against us; the snow which was deep enough when we started, is deeper still now, and the two days' gale has made matters worse, for the snow is now crusted over, and the thin crust cannot bear the weight of a dog, let alone a sledge, this making progress still more difficult.

We toil like men possessed. It is frightful work among

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the pressure ridges in the dark; the snow lies piled in drifts a yard deep, and we have to dig a way for the sledges. Two of the dogs have died of exhaustion, and when at last, after two and a half hours' work, we get over the ridge, which is 300 yards wide, it is only to find our way as toilsome as ever, for the sledge cuts its way like a snow plough, leaving a deep furrow behind, and we march beside it, hauling and pushing as best we can.

Every ten minutes we are obliged to halt, not only for our own sakes, but also for the sake of the dogs; beasts and men are utterly fatigued, and care for nothing but the much-needed rest. We lie down on the sledges and stare up at the dark sky—it is almost black—where the stars are still to be seen, even in the middle of the day, and as soon as we have rested—or rather got our breath again—we start off once more, hauling and shoving through the deep snow, and longing already for the next breathing space.

Three times at least in ten minutes I look at my watch. It is cruel work, and if it is hard for us two, what must it be for Jørgensen, who is toiling away in spite of his swollen and aching feet, working as hard as any of us, and without a murmur. But the sledges must be lightened; we find an iceberg on which we can make a depot, and off we go once more through the dark and the deep snow, weary and exhausted, the dogs half dead with hunger, cold and fatigue.

At last we reach the continent, near Devil's Cape, and now the worst should be over. Here we can drive along the coast, where the ice should be free from snow, and here we have two days' good going—good at least in comparison to what we have just had, but bad as regards the weather, for there is a gale every other day, and we have to lie up for two days outside Bessel Bay.

They are weary days, lying idle in the tent. We can't afford a light, so we lie in the dark, nor have we sufficient

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provisions to allow of our eating as much as we should like, and the petroleum will soon be used up if the weather and the bad going last. This means that we cannot even get warm in our tiny shelter, and with the sleeping bags wet again it is easy to imagine that we are not a very cheerful party; we lie there in silence, each occupied with his own dreary thoughts.

The dogs are almost done; we have had to carry "Bastard" on a sledge for half a day, and now he is taken into the tent, where we try to tempt him with food, but all the poor beast cares for is rest and warmth. This last he finds by creeping close up to Jørgensen, who lies in his sleeping bag, himself an invalid. Jørgensen takes the dying dog up in his arms, and holds it there until late in the evening, when he lays it down in a corner of the tent. Next morning it lies there dead, and "Tæven" takes its place in the tent. I am inclined to agree with Iversen, that we are in a devilish tight fix.

We can get along all right over level ice, but there is no more level ice now: we have to cross the bay to Shannon Island, and that means bad going all the way. The ice is heavy, with big pressure ridges, lumps of old ice and thick floes frozen in, and to make matters worse, we cannot see the obstacles in our way. I let Girly pick her own way, she knows what she is up to, and we can trust her to do her best. Girly and I drive the foremost sledge, behind me are Jørgensen and Iversen with the heavy sledge, drawn by seven exhausted beasts, so exhausted, indeed, that Iversen, after a short rest, calls out to me to stop a bit, while he lifts the dogs to their feet! But in spite of all, the two men are cheerful and happy, and when we come to a little stretch of level ice, I hear them shouting in chorus a fragment of the old Danish wedding hymn: "'Tis sweet to travel life's road together."

For three days we strive towards our goal, Shannon



LUNCH ON THE ICE

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THE "ALABAMA" FROZEN INTO THE ICE (taken by moonlight)

THE JOURNEY TO LAMBERT'S LAND

Island, which lies there ahead, without apparently coming a bit nearer. At last we see that we are getting nearer land; we reach the coast, one more night in the wet sleeping bags, and then off we go down the bay, keeping close in to the coast, until we reach the point where we have to cross the land. There we leave all our belongings, taking only my little sledge, to which we harness all the dogs who are able to pull, the sick ones being placed in the sledge cover. Jørgensen rides with them, and we start: two hours more, and we are home again!

It is not an easy journey over the land. There are big "sastrugi" and dried-up watercourses, which we cannot see in the pitchy darkness, but when we come to the level ice, we tear across it like a hurricane. The dogs seem to know that there is something new and delightful ahead, something different from the life of the last three months, and they dash along, the runners singing over the ice. We round a point on the glacier, catch a glimpse of the *Alabama* in the darkness, and a moment later a light shines out.

Can one speak of a living light? I do not know, but I am certain that we could see that light stop, and listen, as if in surprise, lift a little, and jump as if for joy, and then run across the deck, returning a moment later followed by other lights, which rapidly spread out over the ice. Dark figures came gliding towards us, stop, and turn with a bark and run back, followed by our own dogs, the latter howling and barking, their tails in the air, forgetting their weariness, and running as they had never run before.

And now we see the outline of the ship distinctly against the dark, a shout, more lights, more howlings, "Whoa, Girly, here we are at last!" The dogs stop, and we crawl stiffly out of our sledge, to greet our comrades flocking round us. Look! there is Laub, his hands deep down in his pockets, shivering with cold, but overjoyed to see us—

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in spite of the fact that he has just been routed out from sleep in his cosy bunk.

Willing hands unharness the dogs, cheery companions help us on board: down in the cabin there is light and warmth, and soon we are sitting each in his corner with a cup of steaming coffee, telling the story of our journey. But there is not much time for this; Unger has baked some bread; real white bread, a treat for the gods! This is much more to our taste, and as we sit there, our clothes begin to thaw, the wet drips off us, and soon we are sitting in a puddle. To the astonishment of our comrades, we pull off what seems to be a series of wet and filthy rags, layer after layer of clothes all equally soaked. But what do we care for that? We are back on board once more, and there are dry things to be had. It is a glorious time! We fling ourselves down on the lockers and lie there drinking coffee and eating real bread, and then we talk of our journey, of life on board, and of the coming feast—Christmas—which is only a week distant.

Splendid it is to be home again, glorious to get decent food once more, and most delightful of all, to stretch our stiff limbs in the comfort of a warm dry bunk!

CHAPTER III

WINTER QUARTERS

Life on board—Minor sledge trips—Christmas—Preparations for the start—The sun once more—Laub goes northward with provisions—The last morning—Good-bye to the ship.

HERE we are back on board once more, as comfortable as it is possible to be in North-east Greenland, which, after all, is saying a good deal. We have plenty of good things to eat, we have tobacco, clean clothes, and as many of the blessings of civilisation as we can reasonably desire; best of all, however, is the feeling of being heartily welcome; our comrades on board cannot do enough for us.

And so we keep holiday, eating our fill of Unger's lovely white bread—much to his disgust, he has to bake two big loaves a day—smoking, and sleeping when there is nothing better to do. And in the intervals our comrades tell us tales of all that has happened during the three months we have been away.

Unger, for instance, has been out hunting musk ox, with Poulsen, on the very day of our departure, shortly after they had said good-bye to us. They had just turned back, when they saw the beast standing some way off upon a hill. Their sporting instinct awakened, they started off in chase, crawling on all fours and “stalking” in the most approved fashion; taking cover in dried-up watercourses, and gradually getting nearer to their unsuspecting quarry. At last they got within range, sighted, and—what on earth—

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a musk ox with a tail! And sure enough the beast stood wagging it; a moment later it sent up a howl, and came tearing down upon the two big-game hunters, who felt somewhat small when they discovered that the "game" they had been stalking so carefully was one of their own dogs. And now it goes by the name of "the musk ox," on board. Poulsen and Unger don't seem to like the name, but it sticks all the same.

Then Laub and Olsen returned after having escorted us part of the way—they made a remarkably quick journey back—and shortly afterwards Laub started off again, this time with Poulsen, over to Haystack, where they wanted to make some observations. They had to wait several days for the weather to clear, and when it finally did so, they took their observations from the top of the Haystack, after which they slid down—it cost them a pair of breeches, but the fun of the long slide amply repaid them for the loss. They had also got a bear, and we were taken down into the hold to see the skin, which was not, however, in very fine condition. And for the tenth time we were entertained with the story, how they had been sitting in their tent talking of this or that when suddenly they heard the dogs give tongue. They guessed at once that something out of the way was happening, and when they came out they found the dogs swarming round a big bear. The beast tried to make off as soon as he saw the reinforcements, but the dogs held on, and the result was a complete victory of science over brute force, which finally succumbed to the effects of 11 mm. rifles. But there are certain disadvantages attending the shooting of bear in winter, as, for instance, the subsequent skinning, and neither Laub nor Poulsen were at all enthusiastic over this part of the performance.

Otherwise nothing remarkable happened on that trip, nor on the next expedition which Laub and Unger made round Shannon Island. Here, however, something *might*



COOKING DOG-FOOD IN WINTER-TIME



COOKING DOG-FOOD IN SUMMER-TIME

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LIEUTENANT JORGENSEN IN HANDGAGES



OUR FAVORITE DOG : "GIRLY"

WINTER QUARTERS

easily have happened, and that anything but pleasant. They had driven ten miles or more over young ice, close to the open water. It was late, and quite dark, before they reached the coast, but next morning the ice was gone, and there where they had passed the night before was now open sea. They had reached the American depot at the southeastern point of Shannon Island, and were thus more or less comfortable, grinding coffee for use on board, while they waited for solid ice to give them a passage over to Bass Rock. They ground away for a whole day, and all the next—six solid days they stayed there grinding coffee, fifty pounds of it in all; one twentieth of all the coffee at the depot. But the ice was still unsafe between them and Bass Rock, so they had to turn back, and returned to the ship about the 20th of November. They had made a good many observations on these sledge trips, but autumn is not a good time for cartographical work, and these two expeditions were mainly intended to serve as some sort of practice for themselves and the dogs.

They had been working very hard, however, all round, taking tidal observations every hour of the twenty-four, cooking dog-feed once a day, and had managed to get the ship completely covered in with canvas before it got too cold. It is cosy and comfortable on deck now, the wind cannot get in, and hitherto the snow has also been kept out, but this is probably too good to last. However, a layer of snow on deck won't matter, it will serve to keep out the cold. The dogs we had left behind were all in good condition, and their numbers had been increased by the arrival of two lots of puppies, fat little beggars they were, almost too fat, for Eskimo dogs have a natural inclination to eat and eat until they can eat no more, and the youngsters faithfully follow the example of their elders, stuffing themselves until they can hardly stand on their legs. I am a little afraid that the pups will grow up bandy-legged, like dachshunds. Well,

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it doesn't matter very much if they do, we hope to be able to manage without them. Poulsen looks after them, he is very fond of animals, and spends all his spare time feeding the pups, who waddle about after him like so many sausages as soon as he shows himself on deck.

Otherwise nothing particular has happened—unless we count a visit paid us by a bear, that came scraping against the side of the ship, but Bruin had been cautious enough to choose the night-time for his little expedition, which otherwise might have cost him dear.

We are idlers, as I have mentioned, for the time being, but our comrades are busy getting ready for Christmas, and there is plenty to do; washing and cleaning up all round, bread to be baked ready for the holidays, and Unger goes about with an air of mystery—he is making cakes, which he does to perfection, not even that difficult dish, an apple cake, being beyond his powers.

And outside too it looks as if things were being cleaned up ready for Christmas. The storm does the sweeping; it is blowing continually, shrieking through the rigging and thundering violently against the canvas housing, but it cleans things up; the loose snow is swept together and all the dirt is covered by a layer of newly fallen snow, dazzlingly white. It is a "white Christmas" as we say in Denmark, if indeed we can call it "white" when the sky is so dark that we can see the stars shining brightly all day.

It is cold outside, and Iversen and I, the two idlers, rub our hands with delight at the thought that we are cosy and warm within doors. We are in the best of spirits, and thoroughly enjoying ourselves, but, alas! the same cannot be said of another of us, who ought to be just as well off: Jørgensen. He lies there on the locker, watching the preparations, but his feet are painful and his thoughts are running on the future. He doesn't say a word, but I know

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WINTER QUARTERS

what he is continually thinking : “ Shall I get well in time for the sledge trip ? ”

Laub acts the part of doctor and nurse ; he is not as skilful, perhaps, as some, but no one could be kinder. Every evening, when the day’s work is over, he sees to Jørgensen’s bandages, as deftly, carefully and gently, as if he had done nothing else all his life.

Christmas Eve arrives, and the wonderful preparations are finished. Unger stayed up last night until all the rest of us were asleep, and decorated the cabin with flags, evergreens and candles. It looked quite festive and Christmassy, when we woke next morning and saw the result of his work. Unger was delighted, and proud of his share in the preparations.

There is something strange about Christmas : no other feast has such power to call up memories from one’s childhood. They are importunate, these memories, they come when least expected ; memories of Christmas at home, with the Christmas tree and its candles, sweets and presents. They call our thoughts away from where we are, away beyond the ice to the homely hearth round which are gathered parents, brothers and sisters, sending a kindly thought to absent sons and brothers. These memories—and the contrast—to these no doubt is due the fact that Christmas is always a complete fiasco : for it is certainly not our fault. We are willing enough to keep the good old feast with all traditional honours. And nothing is lacking : Christmas fare, specially packed by “ Danica ” is on the table. There are sweets, wine, and cigars in abundance, candles and evergreen branches, presents also, and goodwill and fellowship and apparent cheerfulness. This last, however, is unfortunately only skin-deep, and we soon give up trying to make the evening a success, drink one more glass to “ absent friends,” and turn in, our thoughts roving free, back to the days when Christmas was Christmas, and happiness and joy were genuine.

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Christmas once over, we begin preparing in earnest for the long sledge expedition. All are hard at work, for there is much to be done. There are uppers to be sewn on to our "finnesko" (boots of reindeer skin), and soles to be made. Unger is to manufacture sledges, while Laub attends to the packing of provisions. Snow-overalls must also be made, there are things to be weighed and measured, but first of all the lists of equipment have to be made out, and this part of the work falls to my share.

All work with a will, however, and everything goes on famously. Even Jørgensen, lying in his bunk, is busy plaiting soles; thus doing his share of the work, and feeling that he has some part in the preparations.

But seven men are none too many, with the daily work to be kept going all the time. It is one man's work to cook for us, and every afternoon two men are busy cooking dog-feed; then there is the snow to be shovelled away from the deck, for the weather is bad, with snowstorms nearly every day, making great snowdrifts on the deck. All day we are at work, each in a different part of the ship. Laub is aft in the cabin, which looks and smells like a grocer's shop, measuring and weighing out provisions, and packing everything in cases. Down in the hold Unger is busy making sledges. He has rigged up quite a carpenter's shop down there, and piece by piece he fits the sledges together, the lashing being done by Olsen or Poulsen. My place is down in the foc'sle, where I am busy reckoning out our stores; every ounce must be considered. Opposite me sits Olsen, hard at work with a sewing machine. There is a rattling of pots and pans in the galley, and the man who happens to be cook for the moment comes out—ugh, it's hot in there! He sits down on the lockers and mops his face, next minute he is off again, back to his work. Now and then Iversen gives us a look in; he goes round doing what metal work there is to be done, and lending a hand wherever he can.



OUR CHRISTMAS PARTY



SNOW BLOWN ON THE DECK

WINTER QUARTERS

Not until evening are we all mustered together, and when we have finished our meal, we amuse ourselves as best we can—reading, playing chess, and talking over old times.

But the winter is not a very cheerful time, and we are all delighted when we begin to notice that it is growing lighter. The change comes quickly once it has begun, we almost fancy we can see the difference from one day to another, and our longing to be off increases—this work on board is not exactly to our liking. It was not so bad in mid-winter, then we were glad enough to stay indoors, and there was no great temptation to venture out, but now that it is growing lighter it is not so easy, and we take every opportunity of getting a little outing. But work first, pleasure after—and there is not much time for the latter. Only on Sundays can we find time to enjoy a brisk run with a dog-sledge. We go out every Sunday for a long drive, coming back in the evening greatly refreshed, but tired out and ravenously hungry. We arrange little picnics, drive down to the middle of the bay, taking an oil-stove with us, and enjoy our coffee in the open air. The coffee is splendid, but it is cold work waiting for it to boil. If the truth must be told, the climate up here is not exactly suited to picnics after all.

Otherwise one day is just like another : we get up, eat, and work at exactly the same time, the only variety being in the weather, storm one day, calm the next. It is rather like a prison, and even though our imprisonment is to a certain extent a voluntary one, we are none the less delighted to notice, on the 5th of February, a sure sign of approaching liberation. It is the sun, which comes from warmer, lighter regions, promising us a speedy deliverance from this monotonous inactivity.

Iversen is the first to see it; it is two days before its time, by the way—and he hurries round the ship from bow to stern, and down into the hold, crying at the top of his

LOST IN THE ARCTIC

voice : "The sun, the sun !" At the joyful news, Laub stops his weighing and hurries up, Unger throws down his work and calls out to ask if it is really true, before he, too, comes up from the hold, and Poulsen and Olsen and I, who have been working in the foc'sle, tumble over each other in our haste.

It is true enough : the sun is there. Half of it is showing above the southern horizon, blood-red, and horribly cold to look at, but yet seeming to give some sort of warmth. The snow is no longer dull white, but tinged with faint pink, and all sparkling and glittering. Best of all, we can once more see our own shadows, not very sharp it is true, but enormously long, stretching away almost as far as we can see. Strange, that men should be so glad to see a shadow ! Dull indeed must the winter be, when even a shadow becomes interesting.

We knock off work ; as long as the sun is to be seen, all are on deck, even Jørgensen, and we stand there shivering, with faces yellowish-green in hue, blinking at the mighty source of light, which soon begins to sink once more. Now only the uppermost edge remains above the horizon ; a moment more, and the sun is gone. The sky is glowing still in the south, but all about us the light has faded from the millions of ice-crystals, the rosy colour has disappeared, and the snow is once more greyish-white, as it has been all the winter. We creep below again to our cosy quarters, overjoyed to think that the long winter is past, spring is at the door, and the sledge trip soon to begin.

We lose no time. On the 16th of February Laub starts off with Iversen, Poulsen and Unger. They have three sledges, carrying a total weight of 1583 pounds, and their orders are to get as far north as possible, unload the provisions and be back again by the 25th of February. Jørgensen, Olsen and I remain behind on the ship, which is now more cheerless than ever after our companions have gone.

WINTER QUARTERS

Our thoughts are tempted to follow them, but we have our work to think of, for there is plenty to do, arranging the innumerable little matters which must be finished before they return.

But it all gets done in good time—even earlier than we had expected, and one day we are standing outside the ship wondering how far the others can have got by now—for the weather has not been of the best, and we are a little anxious about them—when we hear a shout far off and soon after clouds of vapour come rolling towards us over the ice.

The sun shines on these little clouds, giving them all the colours of the rainbow; soon they appear as so many haloes encircling little black spots, it is the dogs who have sighted the ship, and are tearing hot and breathless towards it, their breath and the moisture from their bodies condensing round them. We hasten out to meet our companions, and soon hear the good news that they have had fine weather, and have got as far as Bessel Bay with the provisions. But it has been a hard journey, and they have suffered a good deal from cold. The damp still collects in tent, sleeping bags and clothes, and they have been obliged to travel by moonlight in order to get so far. At Haystack they left the tent behind, and drove northward with the provisions alone, reaching as far as Bessel Bay, where they made a depot of 1328 pounds of dog pemmican and turned back. Otherwise nothing of interest had happened on the journey, except that “Tæven” had had pups, which were promptly eaten, to the intense disgust of their mother, by “Ugly,” “Pan” and “Lady.” But now the mother is doing as well as can be expected, though she still wanders about from time to time as though looking for her lost babes. Poor old “Tæve,” that sort of thing can’t be helped on sledging expeditions!

A couple of days later we are ready to start. The provisions are stowed on the sledges, everything is in order,

LOST IN THE ARCTIC

ready for us to move off on the 3rd of March, and for the last time I go the round of the ship to see that all is as it should be, on board as well as on land.

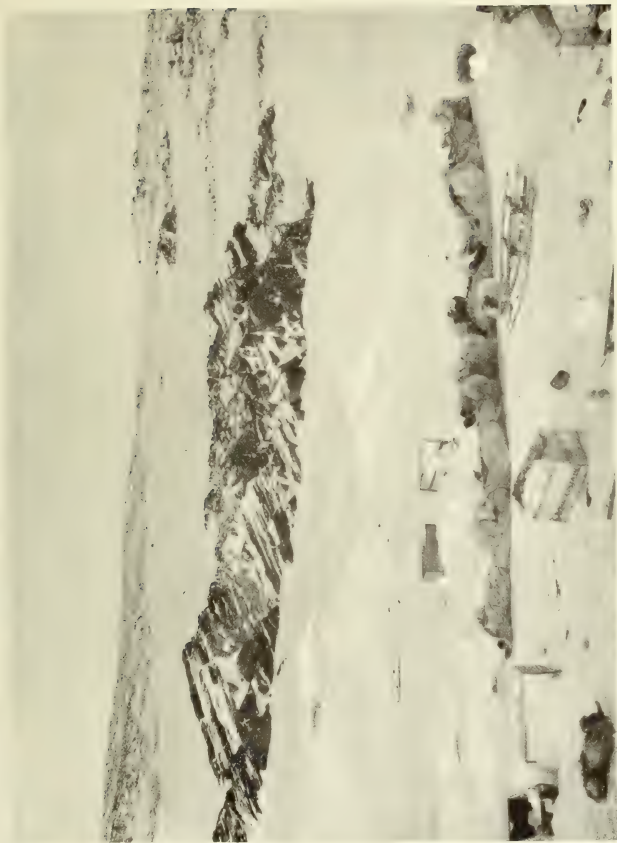
The weather is fine, clear and still, the sun is up, shining on our little ship as she lies there frozen fast and covered with snow, the ship that has proved so cosy and comfortable a home to us all through the winter.

The sun shines, too, on fur-clad men still busy about the heavily-laden sledges, and stopping now and then to thump some warmth into their chilly hands. One is trying a whip, to the considerable discomfort of the dogs nearest at hand, and Laub is wandering about like a lost soul. He looks innocent enough, but he has artful designs in connection with the fitting of harness. The dogs, however, seem to know all about it; they sneak off, with their tails between their legs, deaf to all his coaxing whistles. They know this friendliness of old, and do not intend to be caught.

And the sun shines on the dogs as they race about, eating, playing, or fighting with one another, all strong and fit and in the best of spirits, in happy ignorance of the fact that their long rest is over; that to-day is the last they will spend in luxurious idleness, that to-morrow they are to commence a life of weeks and months of toil, with the certainty of death when over-exertion and under-feeding have exhausted the last of their strength.

I stand on the shore looking out over this busy little colony, a fragment of pulsating life in the midst of the great white desolation, glance down at the ship, with its many happy memories, at my companions, cheerfully and happily preparing for many days of arduous toil, at the dogs dashing about here and there; and think how, after to-morrow, it will be months, at least, before we all meet again, and long before such life again is to be seen here in our winter quarters.

It does one good to see all this activity amidst the life-



OUR DOGS FINDING "WARM PLACES"

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"BRUIN" AND "GIRLY"

WINTER QUARTERS

lessness of the surroundings, but after to-morrow all will be quiet once more, and the comings and goings of Jørgensen and Unger seem but a faint echo of the life and bustle of former days.

It is always a mournful thing to say good-bye, and doubly so, perhaps, up here, where one leaves the last comforts of civilisation behind, to drag one's house and food and fuel about on a sledge, with the prospect of toiling over unknown regions in the near future. The way is long, so many things may happen, and the thought "Shall we meet again?" returns continually with irritating persistence. Suddenly, however, it is thrust aside by another thought: Why, what on earth is the matter, man? This is just what you have been working for all the time; it is the thought of this trip which has kept things going for more than a year, and now, when the moment comes, you find yourself thinking of the future with something approaching fear! You ought to be glad—and certainly not waste time with thoughts of that kind! Ah, yes, it is true enough altogether, and yet. . . . Thought follows thought, and they are anything but cheerful. Hardship and difficulties, for these one is prepared, but to return without achieving our object, to return without having reached Danmarks Fjord—how easily it might happen! And fancy runs wild in the field of the future. I see great fissures in the inland ice which could swallow our whole outfit; see the dogs dying before we have reached far enough to go on without them; there is no end to the discouraging pictures which fancy can weave upon the veil of the future.

Fortunately, however, one does not stand long absorbed in idle meditation with the thermometer below 30° Celsius. The cold strikes through the warm furs, it wakes one up, and one takes once more a practical view of things. What must be, must; let the morrow look after itself, there is no time now to think of all these things, for there is plenty to

LOST IN THE ARCTIC

be done. A friendly kick to one of the dogs, who is investigating my frozen feet a little too closely, and I am back once more in the world of realities and the bustle of preparations.

But the daylight is fading, the sun has gone down, the sky is still red in the west, but we feel the cold twice as keenly as before, and at last we realise that it is impossible to work in the open air. One after another we go on board, the dogs creep together in the warmest corners, Girly and Bruin take up their places in the foc'sle scuttle, enticed thereto by the tempting smell of cooking, and soon we are all seated round the table, which groans beneath the weight of the best our larder can provide: a modest attempt at celebrating our last evening on board. But although we are all hungry and fall to with a will, it is impossible to call up any real feeling of festivity. Cakes and sweets are produced, and Unger turns on the gramophone, filling the place with the lively tones of a cake-walk, a reminiscence from the world of pleasure, but even that doesn't succeed. A scratching sound is heard, and the breaking of a spring brings that cake-walk to an untimely end. Then we give it up; better to turn in and sleep—sleep for the last time in a warm bunk, for after to-morrow our bed will be made upon the snow.

Next morning we are all astir, fore and aft, before Unger comes to rout us out. Our first thought is naturally the weather. From our bunks we could hear that it was calm, but a lovelier morning than that which greeted us as we came up on deck no one could desire. The sun—which is still too much of a novelty as yet to be regarded as part of the daily scheme of things—shines clear and dazzling in a perfectly cloudless sky, the snow-hills stand out clear and sharply defined, and far away in the distance we can see the high picturesque mountains of the continent, bathed in the sunlight, sharp and distinct in the clear, frosty air. One cannot help feeling glad in fine weather, more than ever,

WINTER QUARTERS

perhaps, up here in the unfriendly tracts of Greenland, where really fine weather is rarely seen, and it is almost regarded as a good omen for an expedition, when the day on which it is to start dawns as splendidly as this.

We hurry down below to get our coffee—heavens, what a mess! The hammocks have not been taken down, clothes are lying about all over the place, and Iversen, Olsen and Poulsen, who are all starting to-day, dash around, getting in each other's way, and looking for stockings and mittens. They have been washing overnight, and even if their shining faces were not sufficient to tell the tale, there are ample traces to be seen in the shape of cast-off clothing, wet towels, and a big bucket of water on the middle of the floor, which the last man had been too tired to throw away after him. Unger is running about with a coffee-pot and mugs, trying in vain to find room for them on the table, where everything is in even worse confusion than on the floor and the lockers. It is easy to see that the camp is getting ready to move.

At last the confusion begins to settle down a little, each has found his own things, the hammocks are flung into a corner while the muddle on the table is bundled together in one big heap, so that Unger can get rid of his coffee-pot and mugs, without danger of the whole concern being pushed off on to the floor. A hasty, improvised meal, and off we go in chase of the dogs. Those of them which are most difficult to catch have fortunately been tied up overnight, but in spite of this prudent arrangement, we have our work cut out to catch the less troublesome beasts. It almost seems as if the dogs really knew what was coming, that the pleasant days on board were at an end, for we have never before had such a job to catch them, and keep them when caught. We coax them with kind words and promises, smiling sweetly the while, although the fire of vengeance is raging in our hearts, but still the dogs keep their distance,

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barking and suspicious. Then we begin to play "touch" with them, for when we work together we can generally catch them, and the "game," if so it can be called, becomes furious, on land, on the ice, and on board. It takes us over an hour to catch the half-score dogs that are still loose, and even then we are obliged to let "Little Bear" go, as he is too quick for us, and comfort ourselves with the hope that he will follow as soon as he sees us start off. After this there is no more to be done, and when the dogs are finally hitched and Unger posted to see that they do not break loose again, we gather for the last time round the table in the old *Alabama's* foc'sle, where Olsen has managed to get things into some sort of order. We make a hearty lunch—to-day again, nothing is too good for us—but little do we dream that it is the last time so many happy men will ever be gathered together there.

Our only anxiety is for Jørgensen, whom I had so looked forward to have with me on the sledge-trip, but even he seems cheerful and jolly, and laughs and jokes with us, though it is easy to see that his cheerfulness costs him an effort. And no wonder, for it is the principal part of the expedition which is now beginning, it was for this that he came, all his hopes centred round this one trip, and now he is forced to stay behind, ill in bed, while Iversen and I go off alone.

But time flies. The first ray of sunlight finds its way down into the cabin through the smoky skylight, and as we have to cross the land before camping this evening, there is no time to lose. One more cup of coffee, and then—good-bye to civilisation!

Unger thinks something ought to be done on this solemn occasion, and avails himself of the interval for lunch to climb up the rigging with a flag. But the mast is high, and unaccustomed as he is to the ways and customs of the sea, he is now busily engaged in fastening the flag to the shrouds

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WINTER QUARTERS

—at half mast. He had gone up as far as could reasonably be expected considering the temperature, and evidently thought that a little was better than nothing. Poor Unger—he means well, but there are certain things which offend a sailor's eye; he does not like, for instance, to see a flag at half mast when he is about to start on a long and dangerous voyage. Unger gets some rough words for his pains, before he manages with Laub's help to fix the flag on an oar astern, and learns, by bitter experience, the proverbial ingratitude of the world.

The incident is, however, soon forgotten. Each man has to look after his team, and there is enough to do, for the dogs are well fed, and in good condition, and do not like standing idle. They tear at the traces, fighting and biting, and now and then one or another tries to slip his harness, and run about at his own free will, which is much more fun than being tied up. Unger is running around with a camera, trying to photograph us all, and Jørgensen has risked coming out from his berth on to the ice to say a last good-bye. He looks ill and suffering, as he stands there, leaning on his stick or limping from one sledge to another, patting and caressing his faithful old dogs from the trip to Lambert's Land—all the time with a kindly smile on his lips and a kindly word to us all, in spite of the bitter disappointment which he must be feeling himself.

A final shake of the hand, a last "good-bye" and then—to the sledges. The whips crack; "Mush, Girly—Gee!" and off we dash, making the ice ring, and waving our caps while Jørgensen and Unger, who are left behind alone, wave to us in return as long as we can see them.

Off we go at a rattling pace over the glassy ice, the dogs are fit and lively and soon we round a point on the glacier. The sunlit picture of the *Alabama*, with the flag at the stern, disappears from view, and with it Jørgensen and Unger, still waving their caps.

LOST IN THE ARCTIC

It is glorious to drive dogs once more : to be out again in the fresh clear air, to be out on the trail again after the long imprisonment on board. We are thoroughly enjoying it, and have every reason to, for the sledges run so easily that we can mount up behind, in spite of the heavy load, and drive standing. The dogs dash ahead with their tails lifted, howling and barking and snapping at each other in the exuberance of their spirits, while we crack our whips, encouraging them with our shouts. We call out to each other, laughing and singing, as happy as children set free at last from a forced stay within doors, and rushing over the smooth ice with shouts and cries, while clouds of vapour rise from the sweating dogs in the cold air.

We reach the spot where we have to cross the land, and the snow begins—bump !—we come to a sudden stop. As long as the sledges slid easily over the ice, the dogs pulled with all their might, but now as soon as we get on to the snow, and the sledges are heavier to haul, the dogs give up at once, stop to see what is the matter, and sit down calmly to take breath, their tongues hanging out and their flanks going like bellows.

The fun is over, and work has begun. We get off the sledges, take up our hauling straps, and whip up the dogs, Hi ! There ! Up with you ! and off we go again, but slowly now, fighting our way foot by foot. We haul at the heavy sledges, no time now to laugh or sing, nothing is heard but short, sharp words of command to the dogs, who at last begin to understand that now they have got to work in earnest. It is slow and difficult going, but by nightfall we have crossed the land and camp, tired out, but glad to have made a good start and got so far.

In the following chapters I will endeavour to tell the story of our further adventures in diary form, the diary having been written at Bass Rock during our second winter, from notes made on the way.

CHAPTER IV

DIARY

Bear—The ascent to the inland ice—On the inland ice—
Stormy weather—Very rugged ice—Watercourses in the
inland ice—Big hills—Crevasses—A birthday party.

4th March—16th March.

A SLEDGE trip in spring along the coast is not a very exciting business; one day is just like another, as far as work and happenings are concerned, only the changes in the weather break the monotony of the journey.

Such variety as the weather affords is not enough to write about, and would scarcely prove interesting; we will therefore pass over thirteen days, and about a hundred miles, after which we find ourselves behind the islands in Dove Bay, in close proximity to the inland ice, with the possibility of getting up on to it, a possibility which may now be realised any day.

The thirteen days' sledging have unfortunately taken it out of the dogs a good deal, and what is worse, their paws are not yet properly hardened to the work; their pads are worn through, and there is blood in most of their tracks. But their paws are getting better, and if only we could manage to shoot a bear before moving up on to the inland ice, they would doubtless get back their health and strength.

On the 16th of March we are lying stormbound, and are very pleased with our prospects. The journey has

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exceeded our anticipations as regards speed; we have found the depot which we had to leave behind on an ice-floe last autumn. All our provisions and equipment—about 2800 pounds in all—are collected here in one place, and we are only waiting for the gale to subside before continuing our journey. As a matter of fact, we are glad of the excuse which the storm gives us to lie up for a day; the dogs need a rest, and we hope it will do them good.

17th March.—There was not much reason to rejoice when we began the day's work, for the sun stood like a big dull disc behind the thick curtain of fog, and sent only a few faint-hearted rays down over the dreary camp. The more distant land was hidden from view, only here and there a point or a peak rose up out of the sea of fog, and even the nearest land was so dead and cold and dark, that we shivered when we came out of our tent. We shook ourselves to get warm, for the fog was cold and clammy, everything grey and miserable, and our spirits soon sank into doleful harmony with the wretched weather.

We are all listless, the dogs still more so; the day's rest does not seem to have helped them much, and we toil slowly and heavily along over the level ice of the fiord. There are no pressure ridges to look out for; nothing to do but toil along as best we can, steering for a sharp point which is just visible ahead through the fog. But thoughts have free play as soon as there is nothing to look out for on the way, and dark reflections as to the future weave themselves through my brain as I look at the dogs, hauling lazily at the traces, their eyes dull, and their tails hanging down.

What will be the end? The dogs worn out already, and the trip scarce begun!

An hour later—the sun is higher in the heavens, the

DIARY

fog has thinned, and the land, which has hitherto been hidden, comes into view, vague and indistinct at first, as seen through a thick veil, then clearer and sharper in outline. The isolated masses of land which we could see before take form, and shape themselves to islands or ranges of hills, joined together by a low stretch of land, hitherto invisible in the fog. It is as though island after island were being created before our very eyes; our view is no longer bounded on all sides by a thick wall of fog, we are no longer the centre of a circle of mist, about which all things move; we can see far and wide on all sides, and we feel that we have once more emerged into the great world. The sun breaks through the fog, which now soon melts away, clouds of mist float here and there, here clinging to a peak, there sinking into a valley, but only for a moment, they are driven away once more by the sun, which wipes them out, as it were, or drives them into narrow passes and in under steep cliffs, where its powerful rays cannot reach them.

All seems changed. Before our feet is spread a carpet of glittering crystals, sparkling and gleaming with all the colours of the rainbow; no longer, as before, a dull, greyish-white expanse. We feel as if a burden had been lifted from our shoulders, as we gaze round at the land now gradually revealed, and the mass of great ice-floes, with thin, strange, fantastic outlines, in the middle of the strait. Even our continual anxiety is forgotten for the moment as we look on this wonder of a miniature creation.

Prospects seem brighter now that the sun has found its way to the ice-covered sound, throwing a warm, golden light over the dark mountains, and even the dogs, poor half-starved beasts, look better in the light of the sun.

I look around me with renewed interest, wiping the icicles from my eyelashes in order to see better; my glance moves slowly over the ice. Suddenly I start up—what is that away there on the port bow? It seems to move. I

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look closer,—the big, whitish-yellow mass is coming towards us,—a moment after I can see it distinctly,—a big she-bear, looking much bigger than it really is, and beside her two tiny new-born cubs.

Whoo ! Girly, Whoo ! and with a thud the dogs throw themselves down in the snow—not one of them has sighted the bear. I make frantic signals to my companions ; soon all the sledges are drawn up together, and it is curious to see how the dogs, apparently utterly exhausted, wake up as soon as they understand they are to halt. All is activity as the word “ bear ” goes from man to man, the guns must be got out, and that quickly, for there ahead of us, not five hundred yards away, is salvation for our dogs, a thousand pounds of splendid fresh meat, the best we could wish for, and still coming along towards us under full sail.

But now the old lady begins to scent danger. A few hundred yards away she stops, lifts her head and sniffs suspiciously at the air ; then she gets up on her hind legs to have a look at us, the cubs pressing close in to her on either side. They have no idea of danger ; probably do not know what fear is, but they are anxious, and stay motionless while the mother, their guide and guardian, examines the strange, dark clump ahead, wondering if it is good to eat or not. But she is anxious about her cubs, and as we now separate to begin the hunt, and she sees the motionless body divide into smaller, moving figures, her doubts are at an end, and down she goes on all fours, turns and hurries off, away from this strange, unknown apparition, as fast as the youngsters’ legs can carry them.

Off we go in her wake with four or five of our best dogs. In a few minutes we have found her tracks, the dogs pick up the scent, and the chase begins : first the mother and her cubs in full flight ; then the swift dogs, and last of all ourselves, toiling along through the snow, already sure of our

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prey. Ahead of us is one of the big snow-hills; bears and dogs disappear behind it, but when we finally reach it, panting and hot after the sharp run, we are received by the dogs, who set up a whining and yelping as they catch sight of us, and dash off again, this time in the direction of the sledges. The bear is nowhere to be seen, and it is impossible to say what has taken place, but in all probability the dogs must have found the hard-pressed mother behind the snow and out of sight of us; she had stood at bay, shown her teeth, and given them a taste of her heavy paws, frightening them thoroughly. That a struggle had taken place we could see from the many tracks in the snow, but we have no time to wait here, and while Laub and Iversen run to the eastward round a mighty iceberg, I follow up the tracks, hoping thus to find the bears again.

But no, they seem to have been swallowed up by the ice; the tracks suddenly disappear, and where they have got to I cannot imagine. I stand with my back to the iceberg, staring out over the ice. Heavens! what is that? I jump high into the air and turn. Just behind me sounds the deep, hollow growl of an angry bear. At the first glance I can see nothing, but on closer inspection I find a small hole under the iceberg, with a lot of dirty snow lying outside. Aha, my good bear, think I, now you're caught! And at the same moment my two comrades appear from behind the nearest point.

"Sh!—listen!" We all hold our breath, and sure enough, there it is again, the same hollow growl. We answer with three sharp clicks, as we cock our guns, and with the muzzles pointing towards the hole, we stand there motionless, not three yards away, and exchange a silent grin of confident anticipation. Once more the growling is heard, then a faint scratching, and a moment after the head of a full-grown bear appears right at our feet. Its eyes flash green, its lips are drawn back exposing the shining white

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teeth, for all the world like a great white cat, thoroughly exasperated and about to spring.

A shot breaks the silence. The echo is repeated again and again, but the bear gives only a faint sigh, the blood trickles down its white forehead; it is dead.

We are delighted, of course, and yet, somehow we feel as if we had done an unsportsmanlike thing—the odds were not quite fair.

Not so much as a shiver passed through the mighty body at the shot. The head sank right in the entrance to the hole, where the poor beast could not even move—for even with our rifles at the ready we dared not let the bear come out; there was no knowing what it might do if once it had room to turn.

More growling down there in the cave—the cubs, we say to each other, our mouths watering at the thought of the tender young bear's flesh. Laub and I mount guard over the hole, while Iversen goes back for the sledges.

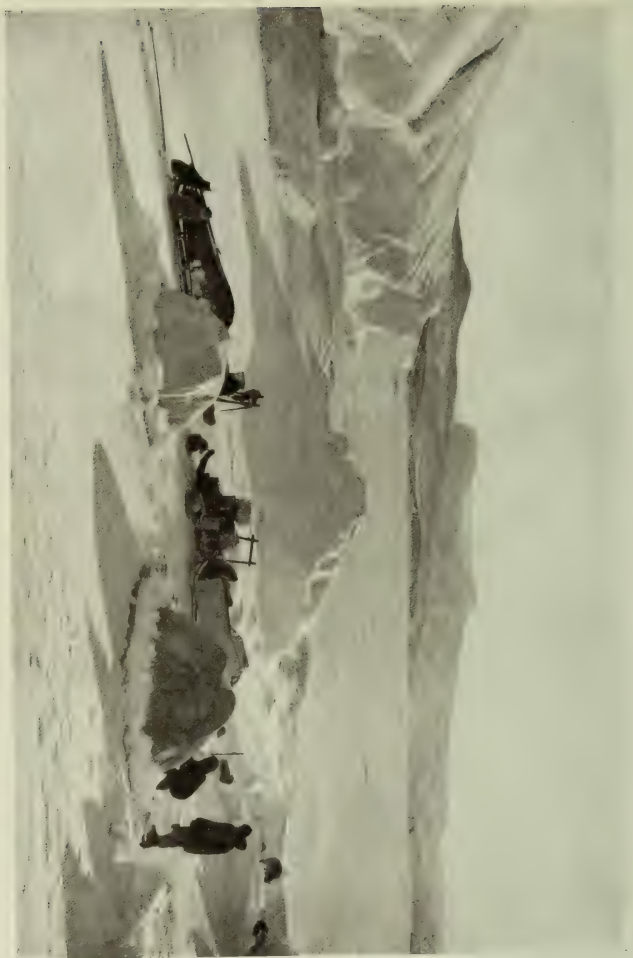
These are soon brought up, the tents are pitched, the dogs tied up, the hole dug out, and the bear dragged forth. To our great surprise we find that it is not the mother of the cubs at all, but another she-bear, who has somehow managed to get mixed up with the hunt—a she-bear without cubs, for she has no milk.

And still the growling continues inside, under the iceberg, now deep down, as if from the bowels of the ice, now quite near the opening, and every moment we expect to see the head of a bear appear, but hour after hour passes, and nothing happens. At last, as the author of the noise will not come to us, we decide to follow the example of Mahomet, and go to it, and prepare to break into the bears' cave, our band consisting of three men with rifles and one with a lighted candle.

Listening for the slightest sound, I creep in on all fours through the narrow hole, rifle in hand, cocked and ready



. . . THE BEAR GIVES ONLY A FAINT SIGH, THE BLOOD TRICKLES DOWN ITS WHITE FOREHEAD; IT IS DEAD.
[To face page 74.]



OUR JOYFUL CAMP UNDER THE SHELTER OF THE BERG

DIARY

for immediate use, Iversen and Poulsen crawl in behind with orders to shoot over me as soon as I have fired, first giving me time, however, to throw myself down. Laub brings up the rear, holding his flickering candle on high, that we can see to kill.

It is an uncomfortable feeling, to be thus situated, as it were, between two fires—in front a bear, and behind me two rifles, but fortunately the cave^{*} soon widens out, so that we can crawl all in a line, which gives me more courage, it being no longer necessary for the others to fire over me.

We continue our way thirty or forty feet in under the iceberg, which must be about a hundred feet high; there is not a sound to be heard, and nothing to be seen save great sparkling ice-crystals, which reflect the gleam of our flickering torch, like jewels in some magic cave in a fairy-tale. There is nothing to be done here, and we creep out again, somewhat shamefacedly, our adventure in the heart of the ice having come to nothing after all.

Afterwards, however, there is great festivity. From the two small tents is heard the pleasing sound of the oil-stove; Iversen and Olsen are cooking bear-steaks, while we others go round enjoying the sight of the dogs' ravenous appetite, and delighted to be able to satisfy them. All of them have their heads and forepaws covered with blood, they tear and hack at the juicy meat, growling and grumbling in their eagerness to get as much as possible, and when they have eaten so much that they cannot swallow another morsel, each lies down on the remains of his meal and goes to sleep. All have got enough, there are no "rations" to-day, and even "Ugly," our greatest glutton, is obliged to own himself vanquished and lies there, fast asleep, on top of a great hunk of meat, ready to begin again the moment he wakes. But he has well deserved his nap, he has done his solid best, and managed to put away at least ten pounds of fresh meat.

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All the afternoon we wander about in search of bear, but without seeing any, and at nightfall we all return empty-handed to our joyful camp under the shelter of the big berg, where the dogs are still quietly drowsing after their big feed, and where a fine, juicy steak awaits us.

Not a cloud in the sky; clear and bright the sun goes down behind the glittering horizon of ice, casting a golden glow over the dark mountains; all is bright and splendid. Truly a change from the morning!

18th March.—It is astonishing to see the change which has taken place in the dogs since their meal of bear's flesh: one would scarcely know them again. But two days' rest, with plenty of meat, works wonders.

The sun is shining in a cloudless sky, and we make good progress over the level ice of the fiord. For the first time for many days we are all lively and cheerful, all our troubles are gone, scattered like chaff before the wind. We have two or three hundred pounds of meat on the sledges, enough for several days' consumption, and the dogs will be all the better for it when it is eaten.

Our only anxiety is how we are going to get up on the inland ice; but we don't trouble about that for the present, we shall manage it all right when the time comes. We are all sanguine enough to-day, fortune has begun to smile upon us; we got a bear yesterday, and so, of course, we immediately begin to think that everything will turn out all right. One is inclined to live for the moment on a sledge trip, having in mind the text that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." It is the best way, and it is only when the various evils of one particular day heap themselves up into an unscalable wall, that one's thoughts turn to the future, unconsciously perhaps, to seek comfort in imagining brighter things beyond. But as long as everything goes well, as to-day, one sticks to the present,



THE ICEBERG IN THE MIDDLE OF WHICH WE HUNTED BEARS

[To face page 76.]



SLEDGING ON COAST-ICE

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resolutely shutting out every disturbing thought. Really pleasant hours are rare on such expeditions, and it is necessary to make the most of them.

To-day we notice for the first time that there is spring in the air; the soft drip-drip of great heavy drops of water from stones warmed by the rays of the sun, blend together to a melody which tell that spring is coming, although we still have over twenty degrees of frost. Spring is a glorious time everywhere, even up here among the snow and ice; it is such a relief to feel the power of winter broken at last, and we crack our whips as we glide over the level ice, shouting to our dogs, till the echoes resound from the hills, and the animals, grateful for a well-filled belly, wag their tails in return, and pull with all their might.

Now we round the last point before getting in to the broad basin in front of the glacier. On either side are high islands, steep, sharp, and difficult of approach in towards the inland ice, lower and more sloping on the opposite side of the sound. And the inland ice stretches out its arms to us; for each cut in the land towards the west there is flung out a branch from the immense layer of ice which covers the interior of Greenland.

We are on smooth ice now. The sledges glide more and more easily, it is too good to last, and ahead of us there is a herald of harder times. We see a high fringe of ice stretching across the sound, and in a couple of hours we have reached it. In vain we seek for an opening, it is as if the floes had joined hands, there is no way through to be found—up then, up on the land to get a look round.

We ascend a hundred feet; that ought to be enough, but on turning we can discover nothing but icebergs and icebergs as far as eye can see. This looks serious: Laub and I climb up to the highest point; ah, that's better! From a height of five hundred feet we can see level ice on the other side of the mile-wide fringe of floes—level ice

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stretching away right up to the glacier, and close under the land on the other side of the sound is something that looks like a narrow strip of smooth ice. But between us and it there is almost impassable ice; one way is as good—or rather as bad—as another. We may just as well make for the nearest land, a straight line is the shortest way, and we have got to get through somehow. It is no good looking any longer for a road, we know now what we have to expect for the next few days, so we take our time, and have a good look at the inland ice, which stretches away, dazzlingly white, all along the western horizon, bounded in the far distance by the beautiful heights of Dronning Louises Land.

There is a narrow strip of level ice between the coast and Dronning Louises Land, which promises a quick journey so far, and with our minds at ease we descend the mountain to join our shivering comrades, who promptly set to work pitching the tent, for it is now too late to go farther to-day. The work is very soon done, and we snuggle down in our sleeping bags, to eat bear-steaks without forks, wiping our fingers in our hair, and agreeing that bear's-meat is the finest dish we have ever tasted, and that life on a sledge trip is glorious.

19th March.—No more loafing now either for dogs or men. We turn out early, to make the most of the day. Iversen is going south to fetch the rest of our things up to the camping-place, and he is off, with Olsen and Poulsen, before the sun is up, while Laub and I leave the camp to look after itself, and start out to find a more or less passable road through the iceberg ahead.

After passing the first chain of icebergs, we find ourselves in something resembling a street, crooked, but otherwise perfectly level. The bergs stand side by side exactly like so many houses; here an ugly square block, beside it a

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palace with lofty towers, balconies and jutting windows; now a little low house, then a taller one standing proudly back from the rest, or with a long out-building thrust forward among the level young ice. We keep on, following the irregular course of the road, which is wide in some places, and in others so narrow that there is scarcely room for a single sledge to pass, but it is good going all the way, much better than we had expected, and after two hours' work we are through it, coming out on to a narrow, level stretch of coast ice.

On we go, northward over the smooth level surface, hurrying in order to see as much as possible, but the weather is unfavourable for purposes of reconnaissance, being now foggy, and beginning to snow. Fearing lest we may find ourselves forced to spend the night in the open, we turn back without having reached as far as we could have wished.

It is a matter of some difficulty to find our way back, for all landmarks have long since been wiped out by the fog and the falling snow, but at length we catch sight of the two round domes ahead, which for us mean home, and pleased at having found a good road over the difficult ice, I invite Laub to come and have tea in my tent. It is not exactly what one could call a fashionable "at home"—I make the tea and hunt out a biscuit for myself—if Laub wants anything to eat he must bring it along with him. There is butter, though—we have plenty of that, and we can spare a little sugar, but not much, and so we sit down to enjoy our meal *à la Lucullus*, and await our companions' return.

We have not long to wait. Soon the barking of the dogs announces their arrival, and Laub takes his leave, for there is work to be done; he has to get the oil-stove going and cook the pemmican for his hungry tent-mates. Something always happens on a journey, and Iversen is busy all

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the rest of the evening relating how near he came to getting the bear with her cubs; she had made her appearance again to-day, coming up to look at the sledges, but after a chase of about an hour, down came the fog, and Mrs. Bear got away, much to Iversen's disgust. "Confound the dogs," says he for the hundredth time, "if only they had followed up the tracks, I should have got her sure enough!" Alas, there's many a slip, but it would certainly have been a good thing if we could have got a further supply of meat.

20th March.—The wind was shaking the tent, sending little showers of rime down into my sleeping bag, when I awoke this morning and put out a hand to see what time it was. Time to get up—there is much to be done to-day, but it is nasty weather, foggy and snowing, with a bit of a gale from the north. I feel much more inclined to stay where I am, in my cosy sleeping bag, instead of turning out in the cold and windy morning, but there are many mouths to be fed, and I shake off the temptation. "Hi, Laub, time to turn out!" I repeat the call until a sleepy voice answers from next door: "All right—but it's beastly weather." Soon we are up, and the oil-stove is humming away in both tents, Iversen sticks out his head and sniffs hungrily—there is a scent of pemmican in the morning air. An hour later we are on our way, with one tent and four sledges.

It is hard work to keep the dogs in hand on a windy day, for every time we halt to choose our way, which is pretty often, one and all creep in under the lee of the sledges, curl themselves up, and are covered in a moment by the driving snow. But when we are ready to start again, the dogs refuse to leave their cosy beds, and a rain of curses, accompanied by the inevitable whip, descend upon the flock. "Hi, there, up with ye!"—and at last we are off once more. We turn and twist between the pressure ridges,

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driving through narrow lanes just wide enough for a sledge, and Girly's skill is taxed to the utmost: it is "Gee, Girly—Haw!" every few seconds, as fast as I can get the words out. And Girly is a wise beast, she knows that her master is not to be played with in bad weather, so she is doubly attentive, until the road straightens out once more, and we are out on the flat coast ice.

Mechanically I urge on the dogs, while my thoughts are far away on the inland ice which we are longing to reach, and the question of what the ascent will be like leaves me no peace. I cannot wait for the weather to improve, but go up alone to look at the ice, while my companions drive back to fetch the last load.

It is a hard climb, for the snow is deep, and there are big holes between the rocks, covered with snow, so that I cannot see them until I sink in, often up to my waist. Then there are slopes covered with hard snow, up which I have to crawl on all fours, hanging on to every little irregularity, and when at last I think I have reached the top, there is always a higher peak just ahead. I am soon sweating all over, in spite of the cold and biting wind, my face is so hot that the driving snow melts as it touches it, and runs down my cheeks in little streams, stopping at last in my beard, which is soon full of long icicles.

It is dreary and desolate up here, the wind tears down the slopes, driving the snow before it in thick, whirling clouds, and naked black rocks stick up through the snow, seeming blacker still in contrast to the whiteness all around. Above me ragged storm-clouds race along, lashed and driven by the increasing gale.

I halt to get my breath, crouching down under the lee of some big rocks, with my back to the wind, and look out over the desolate landscape spread out far below, greyish-white, with spots and splashes of black here and there. Outlines there are none, all is indistinct and vague in the driving

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snow, clearer or fainter as the force of the wind abates or increases, but never entirely visible. A moment it seems inclined to clear up, the sun peeps out between two black clouds which are chasing each other across the sky, the barren waste about me looks less dreary, but a moment later the sun has vanished, and all is darker and more cheerless than ever. I get up and go on—this is not a pleasant halting-place when one is alone. I tread cautiously, trying every stone before trusting my whole weight to it; a false step, a single loose rock might have fatal consequences—and who could find a man in this trackless waste, where the snow blots out every trace?

At last I reach the top, but the result is scarcely in proportion to the difficulties of the climb. I can see the inland ice—it is there, right below where I am standing, but the driving snow has filled or covered all irregularities, and the whole looks like a big, white woollen carpet. After a five hours' journey I reach the tent once more, and soon the rapidly approaching barking of the dogs announces the arrival of my companions.

21st March.—The bad weather continues, and the gale has increased since yesterday, but as the sun comes out we decide to make an effort in spite of the weather and take half of our stuff northward.

But it is hard work: terrific gusts of wind catch the sledges and send them sliding sideways over the ice, which is so slippery that the dogs cannot keep their foothold, and we ourselves stagger and stumble about at the mercy of the wind. Five days ago it would have been impossible to move in such weather, but the bear-meat has done wonders. The dogs fling themselves forward in the traces, and step by step we fight our way on in the teeth of the wind, passing point after point until we reach a fairly broad bay. Here the ice is covered with snow, and the dogs can get some foot-

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hold, hanging on with their claws, so we get along at a good pace. But at the north-eastern point of the island we are obliged to give up. Towards land the ice is as smooth and slippery as glass, while farther out it is piled up to such a degree that progress is impossible, and we have to try close in to land, directly under the almost perpendicular cliffs. For a moment the wind drops, and the sledges run so easily that the traces hang loose against the dogs' flanks, but not for long. With a roar a huge cloud is flung out over the sheer wall of the cliff, like smoke from a hundred chimneys, it is the snow driven before a new gust of wind. Then a noise as of thunder from the mountainous rock,—it is on us. The traces are strung taut, the sledge stops, stands still for a moment, while dogs and driver toil together, trying to force it forward against the wind, then we lose our foothold, the wind is too strong for us. Slowly at first, and still resisting, then faster, we are forced backward and to one side, striving as best we can to keep upright, until the sledge runs up against a jutting point of ice and turns over.

It is impossible to go on, we must unload and return. Laub and I walk back with the wind at our backs, it is easy enough, and we prefer to walk rather than sit still on a sledge and get frozen. But our companions think otherwise, they harness all the best dogs to the one sledge which is to go back, hitch up the rest behind, and as Laub and I walk quietly along, talking of nothing in particular, we hear them shouting at the dogs, who are wild with delight over the lightness of their load, possibly also in anticipation of a meal, and dash ahead as if the devil were at their backs. We have just time to jump aside out of their way as they pass, a whirl of flashing eyes, curved backs and waving tails, then the sledge with the three men, waving their arms and shouting like madmen, and last of all five or six dogs who can scarcely keep up with the rest. In a flash they are past and out of sight, leaving a cloud of snow in their wake, while Laub and

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I walk peacefully on, thinking contentedly of the big bowl of steaming hot tea which will be ready by the time we reach our tents.

22nd March.—At last the weather has changed—it is perfectly clear, and not a breath of wind stirring. We make good going over the smooth ice, reaching the advanced sledges in less than a third of the time it took to cover the distance yesterday, and before the day is half-way through we have passed the steep north-eastern point, and are out on the big level stretch which we sighted some days ago. One more point to be passed, and before us lies our first objective, the big glacier, where the ascent has to be made.

There is a gentle sloping point on one hand, we glance at it as we pass—have we time to go up and have a look round? There is not very much to be seen, but still, this is our first chance of getting a view of the inland ice at close quarters. The temptation is too great, and soon we are standing on the high land a couple of hundred feet up, gazing out over the mighty, heavily flowing river of ice between the coast and Dronning Louises Land.

The ice is really good, and so level, that it looks like a great sheet of young ice. We stare at each other, and don't quite know what to make of it—this is not at all the sort of ice we expected to find here, and soon each of us has formed his own theory to account for it. However, the fact remains that the ice looks good, and that will help us enormously. Greatly relieved, we move on again, towards a little nunatak, where we hope to be able to get up on to the inland ice. An hour later we camp scarcely a mile from the glacier front, and Laub and I start off up the hill to get as good a view as possible, while our three companions go back for the rest of the load.

Two hours' march over plains knee-deep in snow, broken every now and then by steep, rocky slopes, with here and

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there the glassy surface of a little frozen lake, is pretty hard work, but when we at last reach the highest point and can see far and wide in all directions, we are amply rewarded for our pains. Beneath us lies the inland ice, dazzling white in the clear sunlight, bounded far away to the west by Dronning Louises Land, and far, far to the north, where the blue of the sky meets the white surface of the ice, lies a strange, yellowish island. One moment it seems to be high up in the air, and perfectly flat, then suddenly a point shoots up from it, and the whole sinks down again, almost disappearing below the horizon. The true form of the island is never visible, only this continual mysterious play and change of form: the only sign of life in the cheerless, desolate land, that lies spread out beneath our feet. Away to the eastward lie innumerable islands, separated from each other by still frozen sounds, but in a few months there will be life enough out there, when the ice has thawed and the water again makes its appearance: the sun will be there, and the birds, and the sound of waves. But to the west—it is hard to imagine anything so hopelessly, utterly dead as this barren land buried beneath hundreds—nay, thousands of feet of ice.

And yet there has once been life—even here; trees and woods, of which the remains are yet to be found scattered about as fossils—and in the woods were doubtless beasts that lived and moved. Mighty volcanoes poured streams of lava over the land; there was life enough, and light and colour here once long ago in the days when the world was young. But then came death, and now the volcanoes are extinguished, the woods have long since disappeared, and, to complete the desolation, thousands and thousands of years of snow have woven an impenetrable winding-sheet about the land.

And this is the country which Eric the Red called Greenland! But the name was probably a necessary trick, for had he christened the place in a manner more suited to the

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nature of the country, he would certainly never have persuaded so many of his countrymen to go there.

But we are wasting time : we are not here to indulge in meditations on the curse which has been laid upon the greatest island in the world, the past is past, and the needs of the present demand our full attention.

We examine the surface of the ice through a glass—it seems to promise well for a quick and easy journey. We have found a most fortunate spot on the glacier, for there is only a narrow fringe of heavy ice to cross, and then we reach a great sheet of ice, apparently perfectly level, which we can follow westward and far up to the north, under the coast of Dronning Louises Land.

23rd March.—We are busy to-day, Laub is going up to take some observations, and Iversen and I put our lunch—half a cake of meat-chocolate—in our pockets, and start off hopefully towards the inland ice, to try and find a good way through the rugged fringe.

But we are bitterly disappointed. The fringe of rugged ice which looked so insignificant yesterday, assumes the most fearful dimensions when we reach it. Great hills, at least a hundred feet in height, lie side by side, the valleys between them filled with deep, loose snow. It takes us several hours to get through to the level ice which we thought lay quite near the coast. But once there it is good going, as good as we could wish for. We keep on for a couple of hours, the ice still level and the snow still hard all the time. There is no difficulty about this part of the journey—but heaven knows how we are going to get the sledges through the ice that lies between.

We turn homewards, following the level ice, in the hope of getting a little nearer to the coast. We follow the edge of a crack—or crevasse—it is fifty feet wide at least, and what is even more unpleasant, at least a hundred feet deep.

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We are careful to keep our distance, for up here on the inland ice everything is new to us as yet, and we have a most uncomfortable feeling of uncertainty. We never know at what moment the snow may give way under our feet, and let us down into just such a crack, not so wide, perhaps, but very likely just as deep : in any case deep enough to ensure a broken limb. I try the snow with the ice-spear at every step, but all goes well, and we get back without mishap to the safe ice of the fiord at a spot from where the ascent is considerably easier, and the rugged ice much narrower than where we entered.

Late in the afternoon we reach our camp once more, and while Iversen and Olsen are busy bringing things across to the place whence we are to make the ascent, I lie in my sleeping bag, trying to reckon out how far we can get in fourteen days, by the end of which time we are to say good-bye to our three companions. It should be a good long way, if the ice keeps on as it has begun, and I am already looking forward to a successful trip—but travellers in these regions should have sewn on the inside of their tents in large letters “Man proposes, God disposes”—just to remind them that it is no good counting your chickens before they are hatched on a sledge trip.

We have had a little feast this evening. Laub and Poulsen had shot a hare—which is better than bear’s meat after all, and our last night on the sea-ice is celebrated in due form.

24th March.—Now for it ! To-day we leave the fiord ice. At the end of an hour we reach the ascent, and two sledges are loaded up, one with 600 pounds, drawn by nine dogs and two men; the other, with 650 pounds, is hauled by the remaining eleven dogs and three men. At first we have to set to work all hands together, and all the dogs are harnessed to the one sledge. One man stands ready with the whip—

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the dogs will not haul without it—the rest of us pick our footing, and with a “heave-oh!” we bend to the work, and foot by foot the sledge is dragged over the first obstacle. Gasping for breath, and almost black in the face with exertion, we glare angrily at the remaining sledge below us—the heavier of the two. Our backs are aching already, but it has to be done; once more the silence is broken by a hoarse shout, the whip cracks, the dogs howl, and at last the sledges stand side by side, about forty feet above the sea-level.

We turn to once more, lying almost flat in the hauling straps. Often we have to set all hands to one sledge, when it has got off the track a bit, and sunk down into deep snow; but, on the other hand, when we have managed to haul them, step by step, up to the top of a hill, there is always the run down on the other side. There is plenty of variety about it, at any rate, and even if the work takes it out of us a good deal, it is more interesting than the monotonous toil over the level fiord ice.

But the worst remains to be done. A crack lies right in our course, the bridge across is very narrow, and the ground slopes steeply down towards it. We haul back on the sledges, letting ourselves be dragged along, below us is the gaping crevasse, not very deep, perhaps, nor very broad, but it is our first. There is a sharp turn just before we reach it, and we don't like the look of it at all. We quiet the dogs as best we can, the sledge glides out on the narrow bridge, and gets over, of course, without the slightest mishap.

Now there are no more little runs down-hill, it is a steady pull up a long, gentle slope, the last between us and the edge of the level ice. We drive a little way on to it before we pull up—now we have got half the load so far, and about thirty-five to forty metres above sea-level.

It is just as hard work getting the other two sledges up, but now we have at any rate a track to follow, and that

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THE GLACIER FRONT



UPWARDS TOWARD THE LEVEL ICE

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RUGGED ICE AHEAD OF US



THE ICE LOOKS MORE PROMISING

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makes a difference. But it takes us five hours all the same to get the whole of our outfit up on to the inland ice. And now the first round is over—and we hope it may prove the worst—for we know that the ice is good ahead, as far as we can see from the nearest peak.

25th March.—"Pan" is the black sheep of our flock—has been from the very first, and we have long been forced to admit that he is a little bit mad, but so completely lacking in common "dog sense" as he showed himself this morning—well, one wouldn't have thought it, even of him. Every mongrel knows that it is best to keep within hail of the man with the provisions. But to-day Pan got the idea into his head that he would no longer submit to this harnessing business, and as I make towards him, never dreaming of mutiny, he suddenly turns and rushes off back on our tracks of yesterday. In vain we whistle and call him by name—he is evidently deaf as well as blind (Pan has, as Iversen says, only one eye, and there is something wrong with the other)—he doesn't hear, and in a few minutes he has disappeared completely among the rugged ice. A man must go off after him, for there is no knowing when he will stop now he has once got away.

Iversen is good at catching dogs—they don't seem to think him as dangerous as the rest of us—and he is despatched in search of the fugitive. And meanwhile the rest of us tramp up and down the ice, cursing Pan to the full extent of our vocabulary and promising him the most awful thrashing when we get hold of him. But he has to be caught first—half-an-hour passes, an hour—and still no signs of Iversen and Pan.

Confound the dog! Laub and I start off following Iversen's tracks, to see where he has got to. But we reach the edge of the glacier without seeing anything of either of them save indistinct footprints in the snow. "All right,

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Pan, my boy," I exclaim in righteous indignation, "just you wait till I get hold of you—I'll teach you!" And we step out once more, until at last we are down on the fiord ice again, wondering how long the chase is going to last.

Half-an-hour later we see a little black spot on the ice ahead—it is Iversen—and behind him a smaller spot—Pan, whom he has taken in tow. In our joy at seeing him back—for Pan is a good sort, when all is said and done—but more perhaps from fear lest he should try it on again, we decide to let him off the thrashing. Pan tugs at the leash and wants to make off as soon as he sees us, he has sense enough to know that he is going to "catch it," but Iversen has fastened his belt round the beast's neck, and hangs on grimly, for he has had to trudge all the way back to our old camping-place, where he found Pan lying in an empty packing-case.

Altogether, this little expedition costs us five hours—Pan, Pan—if ever a dog deserved a licking, it is you!

It is slow going to-day. We sledge along through a deep layer of soft snow, which has fallen since we were up here the other day, and we are hauling up a fairly steep slope all the time. It is cruel work, but the dogs pull well, thanks to the bear's meat, and by the time we camp, at five in the afternoon, we reckon we have made six miles over the inland ice, and are well on the way to Queen Louise's Land.

Our idea was now to arrange the transport of our goods in such a manner that we need only shift our camp every other day. This can be done by going back to-morrow to fetch the rest of our belongings, driving them up to the camp and past it. We then leave our gear on the ice, as far north of the tents as possible, and return with an empty sledge, and next day get the tents and the remainder of our things as far ahead as possible. In this way we avoid getting too far away from the part of our load which is left on the ice, and we hope to be able to follow the trail back and

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forward, as it will often be difficult to find the place in this trackless desert. It takes time, of course, but it is impossible as yet to carry the whole of our load at once. We had about 2400 pounds to carry when we made the ascent up on the inland ice, besides the weight of the sledges—too much for five men and twenty dogs to move all at once.

One of our difficulties is the heavy snow which falls nearly every night. Now it has been snowing again, and pretty hard, too, for there is a layer of loose snow outside the tent about six inches deep, and even the deep tracks of yesterday are completely covered. It looks, too, as if there were more snow coming; the sky is hidden by heavy blue-black clouds, and now and then a single flake of snow comes fluttering down, a herald of the legions which we may expect before nightfall. We are hoping for a gale, to sweep the snow away, but, of course, it won't come, it never does when it could be of any use.

Laub goes back with his men to the place where we made the ascent, to fetch the rest of our things, and I start out on a little reconnaissance, to have a look at the ice, which seemed anything but promising yesterday evening, and am pleasantly surprised to find that there is only a narrow tongue of rugged ice, after which it is better, one long, gentle slope after another. I keep on for several miles—it is easy going on the level snow, and when the sun peeps out for a moment between the clouds, which are beginning to spread, I see from the top of the high hill where I am standing, that there is level ice ahead. This is good news, and on my way back to the camp, I reckon out all sorts of pleasant possibilities, arriving at the most splendid imaginary results—the future looks bright and cheerful.

Now that we are working for so many hours each day with comparatively light sledges, we have decided to give the dogs lunch. It is not much; ten ounces of pemmican apiece, but I think it will do them good. We began to-day,

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but when the meal is over, and we begin fixing the traces ready to go on again, the dogs cannot understand what we are doing, and lie still where they are, even after we have hitched the hauling-straps over our shoulders. They turn round and stare at us with big, wondering eyes—this is something new. They have hauled out from camp and back to camp again, and have had their meal—the man must be mad, thinks “Ugly,” calmly turning over to find a softer place.

“Mush! Up with ye! I’ll teach you!” and the merciless whip falls heavily about their ears, until they begin to understand that we mean business. They get up at last, and we start off with the sledge, but I am fully convinced that the more sensible of our four-footed companions are pondering deeply over this new order of things. Only Pan, the scapegoat and the fool, trots along with his tail in the air, as proud as a king, and apparently perfectly satisfied with the arrangement.

They pull but half-heartedly at first, but after a time their disappointment is forgotten, their tails gradually lift, and when we finally halt we are about five miles to the north of our camp. The sledge which is to return is then unpacked, and all the dogs harnessed to it, and at last the wondering beasts begin to understand. Ugly looks at me with those infernally impertinent eyes of his, wags his three inches of tail, and winks as if to say, “H’m—you’re not such a fool as I thought, after all. I half imagined you meant to stay out all night, without a tent.”—Never mind, Ugly, old man, there’s no harm done. Up with you now, Mush! and off we go, as fast as the dogs’ legs can carry them. Their faces are turned towards home now, and they know that the day’s work is over.

27th March.—Heavens, what a gale! It is only one o’clock when I begin to fumble with frozen fingers for a

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match, trying to get a light. Iversen, too, is awake, it is impossible to sleep in such weather, and we have to shout at each other in order to make ourselves heard. The wind comes in violent blasts, the tent-poles bend under the strain, and the tent-cloth is stretched tight as a drum. We gaze long and anxiously at it, to see if it can stand the strain. It looks safe enough, but, nevertheless, we pack all the odds and ends into the food box, stuff our stockings and mittens down into our sleeping bags, take a last look round to make sure that we are lying on our breeches and furs, stick our finnesko under our heads, and blow out the light. Now it can blow as hard as it likes, we have got our clothes safely stowed away, and, in any case, we couldn't do anything in a howling storm like this. After all, it is just what we have been wishing for, all day yesterday—but one can have too much of a good thing.

Gust after gust comes tearing down, driving the loose snow before it in wild career toward the coast. We can hear the snow being flung against the tent, with a noise like a shower of small stones, but we are warm and cosy, and our sleeping bags fairly dry. It is quite cheerful to listen to a gale when one doesn't happen to be out in it.

But the poor dogs are having a rough time of it outside : we can hear them whining, and creeping close in to the side of the tent for shelter. They lie one on top of the other in a heap, and soon the driving snow will cover them up. Then they are comfortable enough, but there are others who are not so well off; viz. the scum of the outfit, evil-doers and disturbers of the peace. These are picketed to a long wire with short chains, so that they can't make trouble during the night, or run away in the morning. It is hard on them on a night like this, but there is nothing to be done. If we let them loose they will tear everything to pieces that they can get hold of; break open the provision-cases, and eat us out of house and home. Tied they are, and tied they

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have to stay, but we can hear them whining and yelping all night long. Poor brutes! But then, as Iversen says, why don't they behave decently?

Towards morning the wind begins to drop a little, and we can resume our interrupted sleep, for there is no sledging to-day. Not until later in the day, however, does the weather clear, the storm ceases as suddenly as it had begun. It has swept the ice clean, though, and there is now scarcely any snow to be seen, which will give us easier going. We turn to and clean the snow from our sledges, but unfortunately it proves a waste of time, for by the time we are ready to turn in it is blowing a gale once more, and the sledges are soon filled with snow again.

28th March.—This is more than we really wanted: a gale last night, and still blowing hard now at four o'clock in the morning. It is all right lying up for a day now and then, but two days running is anything but pleasant. We listen intently to the wind, to try if we can hear any sign of its abating. We are not kept waiting long, for we are out of our tents on the stroke of six, busy getting ready to start. It is quite calm now, and an hour later we are on the trail once more.

The weather does not look promising: ragged clouds are still racing across the sky, and far away to the north stands a high, white wall. It is the snow, thrashed up by heavy gusts of wind. The wall of snow is rapidly approaching; we know we are in for a heavy gust, but we hope it will pass over again. A few minutes later we are enveloped in a whirl of blinding snow: it lashes our faces, collects in the fur of our clothing, and finds out every tiny hole in the closely-fitting skins. It is so thick that I can scarcely see the rearmost sledge, although we are keeping close together. The dogs refuse to go forward in the teeth of the gale, and our hoarse yells are without effect, now that they are no



THE SNOW IS BLOWN OFF THE ICE



OUR CAMP ON THE ICECAP

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AMONGST THE ISLANDS OF DOVE BAY



CAPE DEVIL

[To face page 95.]

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longer accompanied by the persuasive lash. It is impossible to use the whip—the wind sends it back in our faces—and after twice cutting my own cheek with the frozen walrus-hide lash, I hang up the whip on my sledge, to be out of harm's way; it does not pay to use it on a day like this. But this means that we have no longer any control over the dogs. All right then, "Gee, Girly, whoa!" and a moment later the sledges are drawn up together, making some sort of protection against the snow, behind which men and dogs can find a much-needed shelter, where we can thaw our frozen faces, say what we think about the cursed weather, and boast of the splendid qualities of our dogs.

This is a favourite subject of conversation with us—we have each our special pet among the dogs, and I enlarge upon the splendid way Girly has behaved to-day, while the young lady in question sits up in front of me with big eyes that seem to understand every word. The others agree with me that she is first rate as a leader, but beyond this none of the others like her. Iversen's leader Bruin is the only universal favourite, we all agree that he is both a good tracker, a cheery companion and a handsome fellow. But when Visken's master starts talking about Visken's marvellous qualities, he meets with energetic protests from all sides. We have all seen Visken turn his back to the wind and pull for all he is worth—the wrong way. It is no good talking about Visken—we know him too well. But when Iversen asks if any of us have ever seen a dog with such fine eyes, we are obliged to admit that he is right—for Visken lies there looking up at us with great bright eyes that are unmistakably beautiful. He is evidently at a loss to understand why we stay here, sitting in the snow with the dogs, instead of pitching our tent. And indeed, we are beginning to feel that we have had quite enough of this—we have been sitting here for an hour now; we look at each other. Shall we camp? Well, why not? we can't

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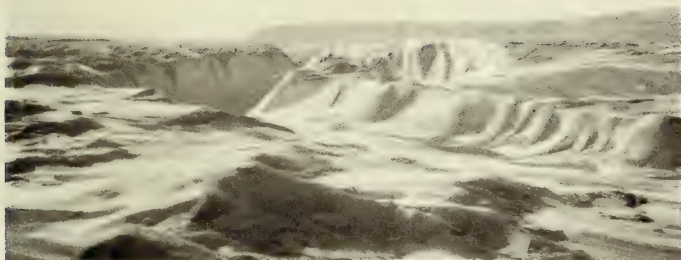
sledge anyhow, and soon we are creeping into our cosy tent.

This is a great deal better than sitting out in the open; we shake ourselves luxuriously, pull off our things and crawl into our sleeping bags.

Half-an-hour later I put my head out and listen in astonishment—the wind is dropping. By twelve o'clock it is almost dead calm. I put on my things and creep out—no wind, and not a cloud in the sky. They are all asleep in the next tent, and snoring heavily—too heavily; it doesn't sound quite genuine. But they are sleepy enough, there is no doubt about that, and they answer without enthusiasm to my hail: "It's cleared up—we must be off again!"

It is good going to-day, the snow is nice and hard; the sledges run easily. In the course of an hour we have reached our advanced post and are keeping on over the steadily rising surface. We do not ascend very much each day; to-day it was sixty metres, but it is good fast going and we shall get higher up soon, no doubt. From where we are now we can see out over Dove Bay with its many islands, and the peak of the Devil's Cape standing up sharp and steep in the air, while far away in the distance can be seen the heights of Koldeway Island. It is a splendid view, and in this calm, clear air, even distant land appears quite near. The sun is shining on the dark, naked land, lending it a wealth of colour not its own, for at close quarters it looks exactly like Dronning Louises Land, whose dark and sinister peaks cast long black shadows out across the ice. Dove Bay is mild and pleasant in comparison with where we are, but soon this also will disappear, and we shall be surrounded by ice on all sides.

By seven o'clock in the evening we have made nine or ten miles, and we pitch our camp, well pleased that the day's journey has turned out so well in spite of its bad beginning.



THE ICECAPS



LARGE WATERCOURSES INTERSECTING THE ICECAP

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DIFFICULT GOING



UNUSUALLY HUMMOCKY ICE

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29th March.—There must be large rivers in summer up here, between Dronning Louises Land and Germania Land, and the farther north we get, the wider and deeper are the now dried-up watercourses. We have to keep a respectful distance, for innumerable little streams flow into these rivers and the ice is in consequence very rugged along their banks. As we were taking up our advance load to-day, we came too close to one of these dried-up river-beds, about twenty-five metres wide, and probably about ten deep. It stretched away to the north as far as we could see; we did not follow it, however, but got away as quietly as possible, as the ice was so heavy near the edge that we could scarcely keep the sledge in hand. Fortunately we soon found better ice, and we have made a good distance northward again to-day with our load, which we deposit about nine miles ahead of the camp. It is dull work with the double journey, but it can't be helped; the sledges are still too heavy as yet, if we try to take the whole at once, although they are light enough when we divide it. What is worse, it is nasty work driving backwards and forwards without tent or sleeping bags; we have had several sudden storms, and if one should happen to overtake us at any considerable distance from camp, we might easily lose our way. The tracks are very soon wiped out, and without this aid it would be almost impossible to find the tents, which are invisible at anything over fifty paces' distance in bad weather, especially if in addition to the wind and the driving snow there is also snow falling from above.

To-day the weather looks bad enough for anything. A storm is brewing away to the north, threatening clouds are trooping up, the sky is dull, and it is evident that something is going to happen soon, so we lose no time in turning round and getting back. And none too soon, for shortly after we have started on the homeward journey the first gust of wind comes tearing over the inland ice with a whining shriek,

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sweeping the feathery snow before it, while dark storm-clouds gather threateningly ahead. We urge on the dogs as much as we can, only one of us driving at a time, the other running beside the sledge, and encouraging the beasts with shouts and the whip. It is a race between us and the steadily increasing gale. Higher and higher flies the snow, the track has almost disappeared, when by good luck we sight the tents ahead of us, half-a-mile or so away.

30th March.—The storm died down some time during the night and it is now quite calm, but the sky does not look pleasant. It is cloudy, and the sun refuses to come out. There is fog to the northward, and it will probably reach us in the course of the day. Taking it all round, the weather prospects are anything but good.

It takes us nearly six hours to reach the load we took forward yesterday; we call a halt for a quarter of an hour, after which it is a quarter of an hour's job to get the unwilling dogs to move; they seem to think they have done more than enough for one day. They have not yet quite got used to the new way of sledging, and we are continually having trouble in getting them away from the advanced load or from the camp.

Immediately to the north of our deposit we get on to bad ice—clean-swept ice-hills with soft snow in between. Once more we have come too close to a watercourse, but by keeping to the watershed between two parallel rivers we manage to find tolerable ice and make fairly decent progress until 4.30 p.m., when we camp, tired-out after an eleven-hours' day. The dogs are utterly exhausted, and it is impossible to drive them forward any longer, Girly mixes up "Gee" and "Whoa!" Ugly turns round and looks at me every other step, and all the dogs stop dead of one accord as soon as the sledge meets the slightest obstacle. In vain I shout and yell at them; the whip is equally useless; they



POLISHED HUMMOCK OF ICE

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POULSEN PHOTOGRAPHED OUTSIDE THE TENT ON THE OCCASION OF HIS BIRTHDAY

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are deaf and numb with weariness, and do not care for either. And my companions are in like case, as I can hear by their angry shouts to their dogs. It is no use spoiling our cattle, so I stop my team, cast about for a good camping-place, and, having found one, drive my ice-spear in to mark the spot. The dogs know this sign, they have been watching me with expectant eyes; now they can almost start the sledges by themselves, and we swing in to our camping-place at a run. If they only would, we could easily do a couple of hours' more, but they won't, and by this time of day it is the dogs who are the masters.

It is Poulsen's birthday to-day, and we should really like to keep it in festive fashion, if we only could, with a nice little dinner both for him and the dogs. Iversen and I have talked over the question of whether we should stand him a biscuit—possibly even a buttered one, for he has fairly deserved it, working as he has with a very heavy sledge all the time and anything but first-class dogs. Still, biscuits are at a premium just now, and, after all, he will be back among the flesh-pots of the *Alabama* before us, so we say nothing about it, but content ourselves with wishing him many happy returns, and explaining what a jolly little banquet we would have given in his honour if we had been on board instead of on the inland ice.

31st March.—This weather is enough to turn one's hair grey; it is blowing a gale again. All these days spent idling in camp are in the first place a waste of precious time, and what is more important, of provisions, for we have many mouths to feed, and are using thirty-one pounds of food and fuel per day. It is sad to see so much good food disappear without getting any work in return, but what are we to do? Neither we nor the dogs can help the weather, and I dare not reduce the animals' rations as yet, for even if they do no work on an idle day, it takes it out of them all

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the same, lying outside in twenty-five to thirty degrees of cold, with the wind howling round them. We have not the same excuse, but still it is not easy to cut down a ration of two pounds a day, although we do what we can to keep down our consumption of pemmican. We eat some apples instead, or a bit of roast pork or a handful of boiled beans. These last in particular I had hoped would prove a great help, but it does not look as though my expectations would be realised, for beans take more cooking than we can afford. Consequently there is a slump in beans for the time being, and we agree to give Poulsen half-a-pound for a birthday present. An expectant silence reigned in the next tent while the beans were cooking, and after a quarter of an hour it was agreed that they ought to be done by now—we always give ours half-an-hour or more, and even then they are half raw. Iversen swore he could hear the beans crunching under their teeth, but this was probably imagination, for our companions assured us afterwards that they tasted delicious. Let us hope they did !

The wind is repeating its manœuvre of the other day, calming down so late in the afternoon that we can do nothing more than go for a little walk towards the north to look at the ice. Ten or fifteen miles ahead there is a very heavy rise with rugged ice, it looks as though the beginning of April was going to be like the end of March ; vile beyond description. We have given up making fancy calculations of distances to be covered ; there is not much fun in lying and reckoning out that we ought by rights to be thirty miles farther north than we are. The difference is due to the many stormy days—but these we had not reckoned with.

CHAPTER V

DIARY—*continued*

An uncomfortable suspicion—Trouble with the sledges—Our fears confirmed—Laying down a depot—A splendid scene—Preparations for parting—A farewell banquet—Our party divides—A new danger—Lying up.

1st April.

APRIL has set in with fine weather; it is a lovely day, and we make good progress. Pleased at having got our gear seven or eight miles to the north over fairly decent ice, we return to camp, sighting the tents to-day at some considerable distance. But disappointment awaits us as we pull in to the camping-place, where Laub is standing with a puzzled air beside his theodolite, which he asks me to read.

“What’s up?” I ask, startled at his serious tone.

“Why, the latitude’s all wrong—we’re not nearly so far as we thought. At any rate, I can’t make it agree—what do you say?”

Neither can I, and we crawl into our tent to reckon out the latitude. There must be a mistake somewhere; we are fifteen miles too far to the south—a mile south of our last astronomical latitude, which we took two days ago. We figure it out again and again, but without finding any mistake, and as the previous latitudes are also correct, we arrive at the doleful conclusion that to-day’s astronomical latitude is right, and our guesses all wrong. We puzzle our

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brains, but all to no purpose. It is scarcely likely that the sun should go out of his way to play tricks on us, and we are obliged to admit the discouraging fact that we have estimated our daily distance too high.

Fifteen miles—it doesn't sound much; as far, say, as from London Bridge to Kingston; but only those who know what it is to bend one's back to the hauling of a heavy sledge, fighting one's way against biting wind and driving snow; who have lived through such days with their innumerable difficulties—trouble with the dogs, bad ice, frozen face and frozen fingers—can understand what fifteen miles means, and understand the miserable feelings with which we sit there trying to find out where the error can be. Tired out at last we fall asleep—to-morrow we can take a latitude again; then we shall know for certain how we stand.

2nd April.—It would almost seem as though some small malicious fiend had slipped on board the *Alabama* as a stowaway, packed himself among the provisions and thus got taken along on the sledging trip. And now he is beginning to wake up and think that it's a long time since he played us any of his tricks, and is doing his best to make up for lost time, with such success that we are now irritated almost beyond all bearing. Day after day our difficulties increase, but to-day beats them all.

It began first thing in the morning, with an overture by Girly, who has been behaving very nicely for a long time, and occupies her old corner in the tent as well as in our good opinion. Just as we are hitching up the dogs, off she goes on her own—not far, but absolutely refusing to be caught. Iversen and I waste a good half-hour in chasing her, until at last we lay a snare, enticing her to play with her old sweetheart Bruin, who is a good old sort, and hasn't sense enough in his head to run away. We send him out

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after Girly, and soon the two are playing happily and gracefully together. We whistle to Bruin in the friendliest tone, and he comes dancing back, while Girly forgets herself and follows, coming nearer and nearer. Iversen starts patting and caressing Bruin, all the time with one eye on the truant lady; makes a dash for her at last, and catches her. Resistance is useless, she is forced to submit to her fate, and once securely bound, then follows a discordant intermezzo. To spare the rod is to spoil the child—and the same may be said of a dog. I am very fond of Girly—she is a splendid dog when all is said and done, but she has got to be cured of playing truant, and while my companions look on admiringly, and Laub marshals his team to witness the execution, I give her a good lesson with the butt of a whip.

At last we get under way, and for a couple of minutes all goes well, save that the ice is rougher than usual. Suddenly I hear Poulsen calling his dogs to halt, and turning round to see what is the matter, I find him kneeling down beside Gogrick, who is busily engaged licking one hind leg.

“What’s the matter?” I shout back, annoyed at having to stop: it appears that Gogrick has cut himself badly on a piece of sharp ice. It is a nasty wound, half the pads on one paw are hanging by a bit of skin, and it takes some time to get him properly bandaged up and the team ready to go forward.

We haven’t made more than about a hundred yards when Iversen calls out that his sledge has broken down. Once more we halt, the sledge is turned over, and as it is one of the runners which is split, we have a long job getting it fixed up again. Now, we think, we can begin in earnest; the traces are cleared, the whips crack, and the air is filled with encouraging shouts to the dogs. For an hour all goes fairly well, save for the bad ice, then Iversen again gives a

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shout of distress; his sledge refuses to budge, although he and Olsen are both "lying flat" in the hauling straps, and the dogs are pulling for all they are worth.

Now the other runner has gone wrong it seems; it is impossible to drive with the sledge as it is, and to judge by the splinters of wood lying in the track, it looks as if the damage were serious. In a moment the sledge is turned upside down, and we find that it is even worse than we thought: the runner is literally torn to pieces by the sharp ice. To repair it is impossible; all we can do is to lash a spare runner underneath, give Iversen a couple of extra dogs, and let him drive the wreck until it falls to pieces.

All goes well now for half-an-hour, then Poulsen is again in difficulties; this time it is the load, which won't stay on the sledge. We have to get it all off, restow it, and lash it again securely. All these stops have taken so much time that we reach the advanced sledges only just in time to take a latitude. Soon the sun reaches the zenith—we have taken the latitude with both theodolites, and we now set to, eagerly working out our observations. There is yet a spark of hope that yesterday's observations may have been wrong somehow or other, but this is soon extinguished—our latitudes agree, and both agree with the one taken yesterday.

There is no longer any possibility of doubt; we are fifteen miles behindhand!

Greatly depressed, we continue our way over the worst ice we have had as yet. It is almost free from snow, the surface is hummocky, but polished smooth as glass by the storms and the driving snow. The dogs can find no foothold, their legs play like drumsticks on the slippery surface, while the sledges slip down the hummocks, in spite of all our efforts to keep them up. It is fearful work, and after nine hours' toil we can go no farther.

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One would think that we had had troubles enough for one day, and once inside our sleeping bags it is seldom that anything goes wrong. The oil-stove may be stopped up—as it happens to be to-day, by the way—but that is all in the day's work, and doesn't count, although it is not particularly pleasant to sit poking about with a cleaning-pin to find an invisible hole, one's fingers freezing white all the time. But this, as I have said, is nothing unusual, and we have to make the best of it. Finally, however, I managed to burn the pemmican—a thing I have never done before. This is the last straw, and it is a good thing that no one but Girly is near to hear my observations upon things in general.

Burnt pemmican is not an appetising dish, even when one is hungry. Iversen is disgusted and I am out of temper, but we can't afford to cook any more. We eat as much of the nasty mess as we can manage to swallow, and give the rest to Girly, but even she is accustomed to better food, and doesn't eat much of it.

But we have been fortunate in comparison with our companions next door. The dogs had broken into their tent, and Laub, in chasing them out, had managed to knock over the stove and upset the pot of pemmican. The whole lot was spilt, and they had to go without. We had, at any rate, got something to eat, even if, as Iversen said, the taste of it was enough to make the most hardened criminal confess his blackest crime rather than tackle a second dish.

And here our misfortunes end, for the time being. But it really looks as if some evil spirit had been at work all day.

3rd April.—It has been blowing a pretty stiff breeze all night, and we are hoping it won't get worse. It is not too bad for sledging as yet, but, alas, scarcely have we finished our pemmican—it tastes better than it did last evening—

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before the wind grows to a gale, with driving snow, making it impossible to move. It is squally, and not until nine o'clock is there any prospect of its abating. We turn out and hitch up the dogs, but before the sledges are ready to start, down comes the storm again, and we are forced to seek shelter once more.

By noon it clears up in earnest, and Laub goes back for the gear, but it is five o'clock before he returns to camp, and we are able to go on again.

There is still a chance of making a good day's journey, and as the ice ahead looks fairly good, we hope to make good going, but are as usual disappointed. The ice is about the same as it has been for the last two days, glassy hummocks with patches of snow in between, and anything but smooth, so that the sledges are almost unmanageable. We have long been fearing a breakdown, but up to now Iversen's is the only one which has suffered damage, and we are just congratulating ourselves on our good fortune in this respect, when our biggest and heaviest sledge gets out of hand and slides down a hummock several feet high, dashing with such force against a small chunk of ice that the runner breaks. We are obliged to turn back for repairs, before we have got two miles from the camp, which we still see below us.

4th April.—At last it is calm, so that we can begin work first thing in the morning. This, however, is the only redeeming feature of the day, which is one long chapter of accident and disaster.

Girly begins it—exactly in the same way as last time, taking advantage of an unguarded moment to slip her harness and run off. And this time she is too clever for us. She is not to be enticed by Bruin, who is immediately sent after her; in vain we hammer on the provision-tins to make her think we are going to deal out rations, she does not even move when we fling a few crumbs of pemmican to the other

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dogs. She knows as well as we do that it is not dinner-time yet, and that there are many hours of toil before feeding begins in earnest. It takes a long time to catch her—it is no easy job to run down a dog—and Iversen and I are almost as tired as after a day's sledging when we finally drag her back to camp.

Girly is certainly driving me into my grave; but before I get there she shall have a little lesson in manners—heaven knows she needs it—and soon her howling almost drowns my angry shouts. No doubt some people will talk of cruelty to animals; the poor things don't know any better, and so on, but it is no good trying to manage Eskimo dogs by kindness alone—they only get out of hand, and then there is no doing anything with them. Whipped they must be, although I admit they often get more than they deserve, and more than one really means to give them, for sledging makes one rough and irritable, especially when things go wrong. And we are really fond of our dogs; we look after them all the time, thinking first of them and then of ourselves, and if they fall sick or get hurt, we tend them with kindness and affection, sparing them as much as possible. We toil hard enough ourselves, till every joint is aching after the day's work, and all we ask of the dogs is to do their best and not make more trouble than they can help. But a dog like Girly, who is treated almost like a human being, and has her own place in the tent, is clever enough to know what she may do and what not, and she would soon be spoiled if one didn't hammer the nonsense out of her in time. So indispensable is she indeed, that we shall be obliged to take a third man up with us to do the work, if she by mischance should prove unable to do her share—which is to act as leader of the foremost team, being driven by word of mouth alone. Every time I strike her I regret it afterwards—but what is one to do, when she will not behave? There is nothing to be done but treat her kindly when she is good,

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and punish her when she is naughty—and what means of punishment have we save the whip?

But at last things have settled down again. The sledges are packed and securely lashed, we cast a final glance round over the camping-place to see that nothing is left behind, while Girly, with recent events fresh in her memory, is whining and jumping forward in the traces in her eagerness to be off. "Mush then, Girly! Off we go!"

And off she goes, turning obediently to right and left, often swinging sharply off at right angles, for we are obliged to keep as far as possible to the small patches of snow, which twist in and out between the slippery hummocks of ice. We make our way forward as best we can, taking advantage of every little patch of snow on which the dogs can find foothold, but these are quite small, and as soon as the dogs reach slippery ice, the sledge, which is still on the snow, stops dead. A mighty effort on the part of the driver shifts it forward a foot or so, the dogs feel the movement, and try again, but the ice is like glass; they hang on with their claws to the tiniest projection, all to no avail; do what they will, neither man nor dog can force the sledge in on to the hummock of ice, which is perhaps not more than twenty feet wide. Our companions have to lend a hand, and soon we are all hauling at the one sledge. Not until they have all been got over can we go on, and make perhaps a couple of hundred feet before we stop once more. We repeat the same manœuvre. So bad indeed is the ice to-day that we think it splendid going if two men and one team of dogs can drive a sledge for five minutes without calling for help, and naturally make no progress worth mentioning.

On a day like this the dogs really do more harm than good, as they all lie down at each of the innumerable halts. It is not easy for a dog to find a comfortable place to lie down, and they twist and turn about continually. Eight or ten dogs all doing this at once, while the harness freezes



GOING OVER A LARGE ICE-HUMMOCK



SLEDGING IN A RIVERCOURSE

[To face page 108.]



SLEDGE IN AN ICE-VALLEY



DOWN INTO A VALLEY

(To face page 109.)

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stiff, get the traces into a tangle beside which the Gordian knot must have been a simple matter. But it has to be straightened out before we can go on, and when the going is like it is to-day, with stoppages every few minutes, the work of disentangling the traces means a horrible waste of time, and sorely tries the patience of the driver.

One bright spot there is, however, which makes this a red-letter day in this time of our tribulation—there are unmistakable signs of good ice ahead. We have been working for nine hours, making about five miles at the outside, with an ascent of sixty-five metres, and pitch our tent on the top of a high hill. From here there is a splendid view away to the north, and the ice looks so fine and level, stretching right away to the horizon, that we can scarcely believe our eyes. The good ice is like a helping arm flung out towards us, and is bounded on either side by very rugged ice. If we can only reach it, we are sure of several days' good sledging, but it is doubtful if we can, for there is a belt of ice to be covered first which is worse than anything we have had up to now. Our only consolation is that we can see the end of it, which is but poor comfort after all, when we know that it will take us at least two days' toil to get through.

Before leaving here we are to make a depot of about eighty pounds of provisions, in case we should come back this way, which, however, we do not expect to do, as the ice will be impassable when it begins to melt,—and in addition to this, also provision for Laub on his trip. It is of great importance now to lighten the sledges as much as possible, for we must get as far to the north as we can before leaving our companions, and as we have only five days' provision for all the dogs we must make haste.

5th April.—We ought to be pretty well hardened by this time against all kinds of difficulties, but in spite of

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what we have gone through already we still grow impatient at finding bad going day after day, and even being forced to lie up every other, or every third, day. To-day, for instance, we are again lying idle. It is blowing a gale, and the snow is driving so violently that we can scarcely see from one tent to the other. We have to put up with it, of course, but it is hard, especially when we think that we should by now be sixty miles farther north, according to the reckoning we made in happier days. We sit up in our sleeping bags, marking off distances, and making calculations, but already we have begun to talk about going into summer quarters, which will probably be unavoidable if we are to carry out our plans. We both agree that we must risk it, rather than turn back, but spending a summer up here is a dangerous thing to do, and—well, the thoughts which crowd in upon our minds when we lie all day in our sleeping bags, and cannot sleep at night, are anything but cheerful. And outside the wind is howling—a dismal requiem over our long-buried hopes.

6th April.—For the first time we are forced to send four men back for our gear, and as the weather is fine early in the morning we lose no time. By six o'clock I am alone in the camp, save for Gogrick, who lies there licking his wounded paw. I am busy building the depot, which must be made high enough and solid enough to ensure our finding it on our return. Iversen's old sledge "Dagmar" is to serve as foundation for the provision-case, and deep holes have to be cut, in which the runners can be frozen fast. The depot stands on a high hummock of ice, perfectly free from snow, so it will take a lot of thawing to get it loose again. A pole with an empty provision-case on top is fastened to the sledge; now everything is in order, and the depot is visible at a considerable distance.

The others are away a long time; it is one o'clock by

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the time they swing up to the camp, and we start off northward again at once, for there is much to be done to-day, and by the time I reach camp the dogs have been at work twelve and a half hours. We have not got much to show for it, however; two loads brought up to the camp and carried on northward over ice which a month—or even a fortnight—ago we would have sworn was absolutely impassable. And yet after all we are four miles to the north of the camp before we turn, and the apparently good ice is only a little distance away—to-morrow we should reach it.

7th April.—With the depot and Laub's provisions together we have left over 400 pounds behind at our last camping-place, which is fortunate for us, for we could never have got over the ice we had to pass to-day with sledges as heavy as ours were yesterday. It takes us over three hours to reach our advanced load, and as the weather is even better than yesterday we can see what lies ahead clearly enough. It does not look pleasant—far from it—it is worse than anything we have had as yet. But we look farther on, beyond the belt of bad ice, which is scarcely two miles wide, and feast our gaze upon the great level expanse which lies before us, dazzling white in the sharp sunlight. Out there the good ice seems to begin at last—one long, low slope after another, stretching away northwards as far as we can see. If only we were there!

Scarcely have we left the advanced load when we have to swing off abruptly to avoid a point of ice, when first Girly and then the other dogs disappear over a sharp edge. What on earth can it be? Laub and I, who are both hauling at the sledge, stop simultaneously to see what has become of the dogs, and it is as well we did so, for the whole of my team are hanging almost directly under the sledge, which would have fallen down on top of them if we had not stopped. This is a job for all hands, and carefully, one by one, the

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sledges are lowered down over the slope, which is twenty or thirty feet high. Now we are in among the bad ice, by far the worst we have encountered as yet. In front of us is a wall of ice, high, steep and smooth almost as glass; even without the sledges it is difficult to crawl up the steep and slippery surface.

We leave the sledges where they are, and go off to try and find a way through, only to discover that no less than five watercourses, separated from each other by high ramparts of ice, at least twenty to thirty feet high and about fifty feet wide, lie between us and the level ice which is our goal. So steep are they, that every time we reach the top of one, we sit down on our haunches and slide comfortably down into the valley beneath. On foot we can manage to get through, but we ask each other continually, how on earth are we to get the sledges over?

It is a wonderful piece of scenery. We have reached the last valley and have found a little cleft through which we can drive to the level ice above, and are just about to return to the sledges, when we stop suddenly, astonished, overwhelmed. Before us lies the straight line of the valley, its bed a mass of great glassy lakes, bounded by high walls of ice furrowed everywhere with clefts, which in summer must be waterfalls. The sun is shining directly down the length of the river bed, flinging sharp shadow and dazzling light over the valley of ice, with its clear, glassy sides, where millions of mighty crystals sparkle and flame. Whichever way we turn all is glittering, gleaming ice, flashing forth all the colours of the rainbow. Only in the clefts of the high walls darkness reigns, the ice is almost black, the snow dull white beside the radiant splendour of the surroundings. The whole looks like some marvellous piece of supernatural illumination—the magic lighting of some fairy palace, decked for a royal feast.

But the sledges! The thought of these cools somewhat

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our enthusiastic admiration. It is a beautiful place : we cannot deny it, but how we are going to get the sledges over it is difficult to say, and we would a thousand times rather see a dull white surface than these splendid but impassable surroundings.

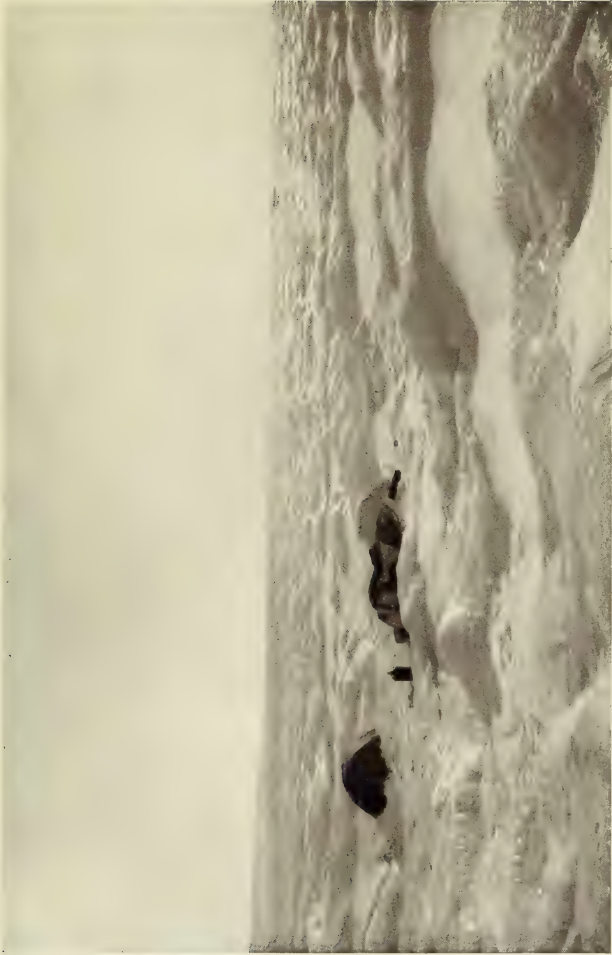
We find something approaching a way—the best there is to be found, which is not saying much, and the work begins. It is a job for all hands—that goes without saying. Breathless, and groaning with the exertion, we haul and shove, for the dogs are no use at all; they cannot even stand, and often we are obliged to cut ourselves a foothold in the ice. In spite of this we often slip, but at last the sledge is brought up to the top of the first hill, and is driven along the back of it to a cleft where the descent seems least difficult. Now we have to haul backwards on the sledge to keep it from slipping away, for if it did so, it would certainly be smashed to matchwood by the time it reached the bottom. A moment the sledge stands balancing on the edge of the slope, the dogs far down beneath it, and two men holding on to either side—they must not lose their grip for anything; if they fall, they must let themselves be dragged with it. The way is pointed out, all is ready—now then ! look out for the dogs, she's coming ! A cloud of snow, a whirl of dogs and men, and the sledge tears down the slope, the dogs howling and the men cursing both loud and deep. We have reached the bottom : two or three dogs have managed to get run over, coming out behind the sledge, but a little thing like that doesn't trouble a sledge dog. We examine their paws, which are fortunately unhurt, and after a short breathing-space in which to recover from our exertion we fall to again—for there are still two more sledges to be brought over the same hill, and still four such hills ahead of us. It takes time, but at last we find ourselves standing in the farthest cleft, safe and sound, dogs and all, which is almost more than we had dared to hope.

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But how changed is the scene since we stood here last ! The millions of lights are extinguished, the sun has passed on, and now the northern side of the valley is dark and cold, the southern wall, still bathed in sunlight, has resumed the more modest natural colours of the ice and snow, while long, heavy shadows creep over the floor which a while ago was glittering crystal. The feast is ended, and the enchanted valley is now once more just an ordinary watercourse, only deeper, sharper and straighter cut than most, and we make haste—if haste it can be called with our snail's pace—to reach the great white arm of the inland ice stretched out towards us, over which we hope for level ice and good progress. We reach the arm and camp—ten hours' work has brought us just three miles farther north.

8th April.—It blows a gale nearly every night now, but fortunately the wind drops as a rule towards morning. So it happened again to-day, and the weather is fairly good when Iversen starts back to bring up the gear which has been left behind south of the watercourses.

Meanwhile Laub and I sit talking over the future, for we are soon to separate, he is only to drive with us one more day's journey to the north. We talk of the trip he is to make to the westward, round Dronning Louises Land, of the work which is to be done when he gets back to the *Alabama*, and our own doubtful prospects. We are more than sixty miles to the south of the point we had hoped to reach with the aid of Laub, Olsen and Poulsen. But in spite of the strictest economy our stock of provisions has diminished; storms and bad ice have delayed us, so now we must manage alone and hope for the best. The *Alabama* is not to leave Greenland, unless absolutely necessary, before the 15th of August. There is still a chance of our getting back in time, but it is doubtful. And so we talk of the days still farther off; of the *Alabama's* arrival in Copenhagen, probably



THE LAST CAMP WITH OUR COMRADES

[To face page 114.]



OUR DEPOT



REPAIRING SLEDGES

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without Iversen and myself. I give Laub messages to relatives and friends : he is to do all he can to persuade every one to regard our absence as something we had anticipated, and a necessity for the carrying out of our undertaking. It will probably be difficult to get them to believe that we are not so badly off after all, but it is at any rate a consolation to know that we still have a hundred days' food and fuel on the sledges. It is poor comfort, of course, but it is all we have to offer, and they must make the best of it. I think of my parents, who seemed so confident that morning when the *Alabama* left Copenhagen; of Iversen's people—he has never been away on an expedition of this sort before, and did not even have a chance to bid them good-bye; and I think of the disappointment it must be to all of them, when Laub comes back and reports : last seen the 10th of April on the inland ice.

And while my four companions are busy with the further transport of gear to the northward, I stay behind in my tent writing a letter to Capt. Amdrup, explaining our plans for the future, and begging him and the Committee not to be anxious about us. Iversen and I both recognise that there is not much chance of our reaching the *Alabama* in time—we shall probably have to stay out the summer on the coast—and agree in asking the Committee to leave us to look after ourselves, and not bother about sending out a relief expedition or anything of that sort. If we don't return with *Alabama* this time, we shall turn up all right next year on board a sealer, and any attempt to find us, if we don't come back with the first ship touching at Shannon Island, would be like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay.

Of course everything may turn out all right and fortune smile upon us after all, but my thoughts are not cheerful company, as after having made my will, so to speak, I tramp up and down outside, watching for my companions' return.

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There they are at last : a little black speck high up on the ice, coming rapidly nearer. Now they are within hail—"How far did you get?"—and Laub calls back that they have got the gear six or seven miles at least farther north : that the ice is good so far, and looks good beyond as far as they can see: The good news acts like a tonic, dark thoughts disappear like mist before the sun, and prospects seem bright once more.

9th April.—The weather is still stormy, but we know how often it can suddenly calm down, so we swallow our pemmican and try to make a start. It is no good, however, it is impossible to get forward against the wind and the driving snow : nothing to be done but get to earth again and wait for better weather. During the morning the wind drops, and by eleven o'clock we are on the move.

The going is good, as Laub reported yesterday; long streaks of snow, perfectly level, save for a slight hollow in the middle. The sledges run splendidly over them, and we are delighted. There is a special providence which looks after fools—if we had only known then what we were driving over, we should not have taken it so light-heartedly. It was not until later on that we learned that these long white patches, level and slightly hollowed in the middle, were merely layers of snow, more or less thick, covering crevasses of the same width. We were too delighted at the good going to give the matter a thought, or we must have had our suspicions as to the truth, especially when Laub pointed to a little round hole, with the words—"I went through there yesterday!" We drive along past cracks of ten feet wide or more, and deep—I shudder at the thought, we are over 600 metres up.

It is dangerous ground, but by good luck we get through without mishap, reach the advanced gear, and load up the whole lot on the sledges, for the ice looks even better ahead.

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For the first time we are driving with the whole of our gear at once, taking the long snow streaks—or rather the long crevasses—one after another, but although the ice is good, and the dogs pull well, we do not get very far. The big sledge breaks down, and as we are to take this one along with us instead of “Dagmar,” we dare not go farther before it is repaired.

That must wait, however, until to-morrow. Both sledges need to be thoroughly overhauled, and this evening we are going to take a few hours off and have a talk with our friends, who are to leave us next day. And when at last we go off to our tent, we receive a formal invitation to breakfast next morning—tea (with sugar) and biscuits (with butter), “as much as you can put away,” to quote the hospitable words of the invitation. This is unheard-of luxury, and a piece of reckless extravagance on the part of our hosts, for as soon as we know that we are to feed next day at some one else’s expense, we save our evening pemmican in order to have a better appetite for breakfast: it would be a pity not to do justice to the spread.

10th April.—The day arrives, calm, clear and fine. Perfect weather for sledging, but the sledges have to be repaired, and we begin early. There is plenty to do; the sledges have suffered a great deal from the rough handling, and the big sledge in particular has to be entirely relashed. It is nasty work for one’s fingers, and we look at the watch pretty often. At the stroke of seven we make our appearance—each with our own mug and spoon—outside the tent where the feast is to take place.

Elaborate preparations have been made to receive us; the sleeping bags are rolled up neatly, a new tin of butter has been opened, and a full case of wheat biscuits stands on the cooking-box, beside it a steaming saucepan of tea. It looks quite festive altogether. We are invited to start in,

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and after licking the remains of the last dish of pemmican off our spoons—we have put on our company manners for the occasion—we help ourselves to a piled-up spoonful of sugar, and fall to thinning out the biscuits, laughing and joking the while as though nothing were the matter. But there is a suspicious lump in our throats, the old worn-out jests fall somewhat flat, and although occasional new ones are politely received, the laughter has a false ring. It becomes quite painful at last; there we are, laughing and joking and trying to look as if we were thoroughly enjoying ourselves, while in reality we are all wondering if we shall ever meet again. The flow of talk keeps on, however; Iversen is sending innumerable messages to his people at home, and explaining to Poulsen what to tell and what not to tell, while Laub, Olsen and I sit talking of Copenhagen, of friends and relatives—anything but the one thought which is uppermost in our minds.

But our companions have a long day before them, they must get back to their gear if possible before nightfall, and although we are loth to say good-bye, we cannot ignore their hints that it is time to be moving.

We thank them for their hospitality and set to work lashing our sledges in silence, while the others strike their tent and stow all away.

Now the dogs are hitched up; all is ready for the start.

Olsen comes up to me with a pair of new kamicks. "Thought you might find these useful," he says quietly—"I've got enough to take me back to the ship—and the old ones will always patch." It is a useful gift, and a kind thought. We haven't much to say to each other now. I thank my comrades for all their help, and their willingness and zeal in pushing on the expedition, repeating once more kind messages to Unger and Jørgensen, and wishing the latter a speedy recovery. Then we shake hands and say

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good-bye, as if it was a matter of no consequence, almost as if we were to meet again to-morrow.

Then there are the dogs to be patted and petted for the last time, both those who are to return and those who are going on. A last hand-shake—"Good-bye—regards to all at home," and they are off, Laub leading, with Olsen and Poulsen hauling at the sledge, which slowly gets under way.

"Good-bye, good-bye, and love to all at home," we cry once more, as they move off, and Iversen and I set to work again on our sledges.

Neither of us say much, but we glance up every now and then from our work to look after our companions now disappearing in the distance, and return their wave of the hand. They reach the last hill, halt and stand side by side, waving their arms. We follow suit—words are superfluous, since they are over a mile away; then they move off once more, and in a few minutes they have disappeared over the brow of the hill.

We are alone. As far as eye can see, there is no sign of any living thing beyond ourselves.

11th April.—Storm again! We might almost have known it was coming, for it is some days since we had to lie up. We have to put up with it, but it is exasperating with these continual storms, which mean a woeful waste of good provisions, without getting any miles in return. "No work, no food" must be our watchword for the future, and we put ourselves and the dogs on half-rations.

12th April.—Storm still raging. This is the second day—a pleasant beginning, and we are not backward in saying what we think of it. Every hour or so we stick our heads out to see if the weather isn't getting tired—not a bit of it, it gets worse and worse, and the dogs are on half-rations again to-day—we, of course, as well. The dogs don't like

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it, and continual fights are the result. Well, we hope it may clear up.

13th April.—It doesn't look much like clearing up, this morning it is still blowing, worse than ever. It is most remarkable weather they have up here—storm one hour and calm the next. So it is to-day; at noon it is blowing almost a hurricane, and half-an-hour later, when I creep out to have a look, it has abated so much that there seems to be a chance of making a start. At two o'clock we leave the camp where we have been pent up for three long days, and to our delight the ice gets better and better as we go on. To-day we shall see if we can manage with all our gear at once, and it turns out better than we had ever expected. But the weather—this infernal weather, it is that which always dashes our good spirits. It is not surprising. It was blowing a gale at noon, calm at one, by three o'clock it was blowing again, and at four o'clock a small storm was in full blast. The driving snow makes it impossible to see, and the dogs strike, as they always do when it is blowing hard. Well, we have made a start at any rate, and we hope it may pass over, so we do what we can to encourage the dogs and urge them on—but are obliged to stop every minute to get the ice out of the leaders' eyes, they at any rate must be able to see; the others only have to haul. But the wind increases, the snow lashes our faces, and by six o'clock we are forced to give it up and camp.

We have only had four hours' sledging, but have made four or five miles northward, so we cannot complain, and the dogs get full rations of pemmican once more.

14th April.—We are almost inclined to doubt whether the weather ever is good up here where we are now. All night it has been blowing more violently than we have ever had it before, save once, and it keeps on long after we

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have given up trying to sleep. By ten o'clock it drops a little, but before we can get into our things it is blowing as hard as ever, and it is two o'clock before it is possible to move.

We make all haste to get off, but the weather is still far from fine, a fresh breeze is blowing, dead against us, of course,—and the snow is driving high, but not so badly but that we can get along, and fairly well too. For the going is good—the best we have had as yet on the inland ice; we sledge along over great snow-fields only broken here and there by fairly big fields of ice, but even these are so level that we get along without the slightest difficulty. In spite of the considerable ascent—about 160 metres—and the wind, which is still blowing hard, and increases, contrary to our expectation, towards evening, we have yet made six or seven miles by the time we camp at nine o'clock, with more good ice ahead. If only we had had decent weather we could have made some good runs.

15th April.—To-day again we are obliged to lie still until well on in the forenoon, on account of the wind and the driving snow, but fortunately the storm abates earlier than usual, and by eleven we are ready to leave our camping-place.

For several days past a long range of hills has obstructed our view to the northward, and the nearer we approach it, the more hilly the ice becomes. Fortunately it is no longer cut up into long furrows with little narrow hummocks between, such as we had before passing Dronning Louises Land, but fairly big hills with deep, wide valleys between. It is frightful work getting the sledges up the hills, but once up they go down by themselves, the dogs dash along with slack traces, and we fling ourselves down on the loads in order to keep up with them. This is a new kind of sledging: faster and faster goes the sledge, almost on top

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of the dogs, who are hard put to it to keep ahead. Then the speed slackens, we have reached the bottom, the dogs can haul once more, and we get on our feet again to help them. It is pleasant enough to drive for two or three hundred metres without the least exertion, but after a quarter of an hour's hauling up the next hill we begin to wish the last run down had not lasted quite so long. By the time the next crest is reached, however, we are glad enough to take our place on the sledge, crack our whip, shout at the dogs and dash away down the slope. The last hill, however, which we have had in sight for some days, is almost too much for us, again and again we have to help each other, and more than once we discuss the possibility of having to make a double journey of it. But this means time, we are not going to do it unless absolutely forced, and step by step we toil up the slope with both our sledges. Our performance is rewarded, for when at last we reach the top, we see before us a great white plateau, apparently perfectly smooth and with little or no slope. We are delighted at the thought of the good going, but it is just when everything looks most promising that one must be prepared for accidents, which always happen when one least expects them.

First a couple of traces break and have to be repaired, then one of the dogs takes advantage of the opportunity to run away, but at last we get off once more, driving easily and at fairly good speed over the wide expanse of snow.

Here, however, unexpected difficulties await us. We are driving along, never dreaming of danger, when suddenly the snow gives way beneath the foremost dogs, and they hang down, swinging in their harness, which is none too strong, over a crack, narrow, but doubtless frightfully deep. The dogs have sense enough to keep still, they know that we are always there to help them when things go wrong, and wait patiently until we come to haul them up. I drive to right and left, without finding safe ground anywhere; we

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must stop, and lash the dogs fast in their harness with girth straps. This takes time, but it is absolutely necessary, for if they should happen to fall awkwardly they would slip their harness and be lost. After an hour's work we start off again, now thoroughly aware that we are on dangerous ground.

It proves, however, to be much worse even than we had thought, and we have not gone far before I hear Iversen calling loudly for help. I call back to ask what is the matter, turning round at the same moment, and the words die on my lips. There is no need to ask. There is Iversen, and there are the dogs—but the sledge—good God, where *is* the sledge? In a couple of bounds I reach the spot, but not before the thought has flashed across my brain—this means the end of our little trip—for on that sledge is most of our petroleum, all our dog-feed, and the tent, and without these it is impossible to go on.

Next moment I give a gasp of relief; it looks bad enough, indeed, but not as bad as I had imagined. The sledge has sunk through in a wide crack, and is only held by the bow and the ends of the uprights at the stern, which are resting on either side of a yawning abyss. Had the sledge been two inches farther forward when it fell, or had the lashing of one of the uprights given, it would have been lost. We try to haul the sledge out, but it sticks fast, and we are obliged to give it up; we must unload it where it is. The dogs are loosed, the lashings cut, and we begin lifting out the heavy cases; first, however, stretching the tent-cloth out beside the sledge, for it is lying over ten degrees to one side, and we are afraid the load may slip off. Case after case is rolled in, slowly the disorderly pile on firm ice increases, and after half-an-hour's work we have got the whole load back into safety, sledge and all—not an ounce lost.

Now we have time to look down into the crevasse: we lie down flat with our heads out over the sharp edge.

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The southern side, where the uprights have touched, is absolutely sheer and clean, as if cut with a knife, the wall of ice stretching down level and flat as far as we can see. The northern side is similar, but with a point jutting out, the remains of an old snow-bridge, which had withstood the heat of the summer and is now frozen to ice, and it was on this that the nose of the sledge had caught. It is four or five feet at least from this point in to the solid wall of ice, and had we been only a foot or so to either side, the sledge must have been dashed down into the apparently bottomless abyss, where the sun's rays no longer penetrate, and the ice itself is lost in darkness. And looking along the crack we find exactly the same kind of snow over which we travelled so light-heartedly a few days ago—nice level stretches, slightly hollow in the centre.

We don't care about going farther for the present. Both we and the dogs are too weary to make any real effort in case of need, and we decide to camp. After some searching about we find a spot which looks solid enough, but ahead of us, and on all sides, there are more or less wide cracks, so we do not feel very comfortable. It is impossible to stifle the thought that there may be a crack right under us, especially as the snow, wherever it is hard enough to pitch a tent, is so deep that I cannot reach firm ice with the ice-spear. It will bear us all right, no doubt, but it is worse for the dogs, who like to wander about, and might easily fall into a crack. We tie up as many of them as we can, and trust to luck for the others, it would be a serious thing for us now to lose one of our good dogs.

16th April.—In 1896, at the end of March and beginning of April, Peary tried to get from Ingelfield Gulf to Academy Land, but was forced by bad weather to turn back. I am no longer surprised at this, for he had eight men and 150 dogs to feed, and met, as we, with storm after storm.



A CREVANSE



THE SLEDGE HAS SUNK THROUGH A WIDE CRACK

[To face page 124.]



MIRKELSEN AND IVERSEN AT THE SEPARATION



OLSEN, LATB AND POLTSEN AT THE SEPARATION

[To face page 125.]

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I lie thinking about it to-day, and I have plenty of time to think, for a gale is raging again, blowing and snowing too hard for us to move.

The weariness of these eternal lying-up days is beyond all words. From the time we wake in the morning until evening comes, our only occupation is trying to find something to pass the time. We divide our meals into a lot of little snacks, for cooking and eating are at any rate a pleasant occupation. We begin with tea and half a biscuit, a couple of hours later we have something approaching a proper meal—a small slice of roast pork and a couple of spoonfuls of boiled apples. Then we pour hot water on the old tea-leaves, eat the rest of our morning ration of biscuit, and so on.

Between meals we sit up and play with Girly, the only creature in the tent who seems to find life worth living. She whines with delight if we give her a tiny fragment of the "crackling" from our pork, and a crumb of biscuit sends her into transports of joy. She dances round, wagging her tail, with a most unfortunate result, for the tent is small, and Girly's tail is large. Under ordinary circumstances she knows this perfectly well, but this time she forgets herself in her delight, and manages to upset the cooking-box, food and all, on to the floor. This puts an end to good spirits; that sort of thing is not allowed, and down goes Girly's tail between her legs, her eyes saying as clearly as possible, "I'm awfully sorry, you know I didn't mean to do it!" Food, maps and diaries are picked up in painful silence—for Girly—and she creeps shamefacedly away to her corner, and lies quite still. But soon one white paw comes up on to the sleeping bag, anxiously, hesitatingly, while her big eyes look from one to the other, to see if she is forgiven.

"Come along then, Girly—we'll forgive you this time," and up she jumps on to the sleeping bag, to be petted and talked to like a human being. But the best time of the day

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is when we are cooking a meal, that is exciting, and may mean all sorts of nice things. She takes no notice of our patting or kind words, but sits as quiet as a mouse, staring at the wonderful stove with a saucepan on top, only her tongue cannot keep still, but moves in and out of her mouth, which literally waters at the sight. And no wonder she watches the cooking with interest, for unless it happens to be tea—she hasn't got as far as that yet—she generally gets a taste of it.

Otherwise she lies in her corner, quiet and thoughtful, and the hours pass slowly. We talk of cracks and other unpleasant things ahead, or remember some amusing incident in the past, a story we haven't told before, and soon we are wandering—in the spirit—through the machine shops at Esbjerg, where Iversen was apprenticed, but more often in the splendours of the tropics where the wind sighs softly in the high palm crests, the air is full of the hum of insects and the song of birds, and naked black children play in the hot sand. This is my contribution to the entertainment; I search my memory until I find some bright, warm picture from the old days when I was a youngster sailing the southern seas. Our thoughts seek contrast and forgetfulness, and memory and imagination endeavour to make up for what reality denies us. But when at last the talk has died out for want of fuel, then the merciless present returns with renewed force, and all seems more than ever cold, wretched and desolate. We creep down into our furs to try to sleep, and over us the wind shrieks scornfully—"Whew-w-w—you and your southern seas!—You are here—here on the inland ice!"

CHAPTER VI

DIARY—*continued*

New country—A difficult climb—Fraud and slaughter—More casualties—Sledging under sail—Treacherous ice—We lose another dog—Better going at last.

17th April.

THE wind drops during the night, and by two o'clock we are sick of lying idle in our sleeping bags, and get up to begin our day's work. Everything goes better than we had dared to hope in the feverish fancies of our sleepless night, and we pass safely over the stretch of ice with the many fissures and reach the top of the hill ahead.

We are now looking out over unknown regions, and all is entirely different to what we had imagined. Far to the north the view is bounded by the high, conical top of the Pic de Gerlache, a little distance from it rises a range of high, rugged hills, separated from the coast-land by a broad belt of ice, and all along the western horizon stretches a chain of small, flat nunataks, half hidden by the mighty layer of the inland ice, which pours in from the west over this immovable bulwark, placed there, as it were, to check the further progress of the ice towards the east. To the south-west the inland ice has engulfed the nunataks, the horizon is indented, and furrowed everywhere by broad, gaping clefts, showing where the mass of ice has swept

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forward over the mountain-top to break on the rugged surface beneath. Southward we can still see Dronning Louises Land, and far to the east the distant coast-land can be faintly seen.

After we have taken a few observations as to the country, our interest in it wanes. It is the ice we look at, spying and searching everywhere to find a way which promises a fairly good ascent to the higher ice beyond the small nunataks. We sight a hill, some 200 metres high, swept clean of snow, and apparently free from cracks—let us try there.

Unfortunately the wind has now got up again, accompanied, as usual, by driving snow, but we have found a way to the big ice-hill, a good level road, with a slight downward slope, leading straight to its foot. But the wind is dead against us. "Haw, Girly, mush! no time for loafing to-day!" and at last we get the dogs moving. Down we go, faster and faster, the dogs bounding ahead with slack traces and tails in the air, while we sit on the sledge, cracking our whips and laughing to each other, heedless of the crevasses that doubtless lurk beneath the snow. We keep on in this fashion for nearly an hour, then suddenly the sledge slides down a steep slope, and we find ourselves on the glassy surface of a big lake. We halt our sledges, and stare in astonishment. We are more than 800 metres above sea-level, and a lake of this size up here, where the ice is cut in all directions by great crevasses and with so considerable a descent to the coast, was scarcely to be expected. Our astonishment increases on finding that the steep eastward bank is a great pressure ridge, at least fifteen feet high, formed of ice two and a half to three feet thick. It appears to stretch away along the whole length of the lake, and judging from the great quantity of piled-up ice, I should reckon that the surface crushed must have been at least 200 metres wide. And how could

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it have happened? The only explanation I can find is that the ice to the west of the lake must have shifted so far towards the ice on the east, that the lake has been, so to speak, pressed flat. But in that case the lake must be extremely deep, in reality nothing but a very wide and very deep crevasse: otherwise both banks would have moved simultaneously, and to approximately the same extent. That the movement of the ice is very considerable is proved by the great cracks with their perfectly sharp edges, which must have been formed since last summer, for had they existed before, the sun and the water would have rounded their upper edges, and cut deep furrows down their sides, whereas all of them are, as we have had occasion to see, sharp as if cut with a knife.

These speculations, however, come later on; for the present we have enough to do to manage the sledges, for the ascent is steep, and the smooth ice, which is almost free from snow, is difficult to negotiate. And the wind: our friend the enemy does not make it easier. It comes howling down from the icy interior, bringing cold and masses of driving snow, which hinder our progress. Fortunately we get a little breathing-space on reaching a little patch of rocks and gravel, which lies like an island in the midst of the ice. It is quite low, not more than fifteen or twenty-five feet high, and we have to turn and twist among the big rocks to avoid spoiling our runners.

Soon it is behind, and we begin once more our painful, upward crawl. The wind increases, singing through the taut traces and lashings, now in a high, whining tone, now in a deep, grumbling bass. The snow drives over the ice with a faint, hissing sound, and now and then we growl out heartfelt curses upon the weather. But we have been lying idle so long that we are determined to make an effort at getting a good day's journey behind us before we camp: we halt for a moment to rub some life into our frozen cheeks

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and noses, and start off again, to the accompaniment of the wind, which howls more and more wildly as we near the top. Not far now—twenty metres or so—but the wind is wrestling against us—we creep forward, only to be blown back again. Another try; the same result; it is impossible to go on, we must give it up, even relinquishing a part of the ground so hardly won, for there is very little snow on the ice-hill, and we are obliged to drive back to find a place to camp.

Here a painful and unpleasant task awaits us. Our worst dog is to be killed, for our provisions are by now so far reduced that the sledges are light enough for us to dispense with his services. It seems hard, cruel indeed, to reward so many days of hard and faithful service with death, but it is better than letting the other dogs starve, while they are still working hard. So Little Bear is condemned to death. His head is tied down to a sledge runner and his skull smashed with an axe, after which the carcass is taken into the tent—which we have got up after considerable difficulties—and divided. Soon the air resounds with howls of delight from the dogs, as Iversen appears in the opening with his arms full of meat. But what is this? The dogs sniff and sniff at the still warm meat—they can still recognise the smell of their old comrade. The howls subside, and Bruin looks at us as if to say—"This isn't fair, you know. What about all that lovely food we've been hauling along all day?"—Ah, well, Bruin will have to put up with it, it is all he'll get to-night. But neither he, Girly, nor Gøjs—Laub's old leader—will have anything to do with cannibalism. Silently and sulkily they lay themselves down, but Ugly, Pan, and Foxy and many of the others are only too glad to get it—they don't mind what they eat, as long as they get enough.

Meanwhile we are sitting inside the tent feeling anything but pleasant with ourselves. We have done a mean

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thing, and played a low-down trick on our faithful dogs, and we know it. And I feel more and more uncomfortable as I look at Girly sitting there in her old place, shifting restlessly about, waiting to see what is going to happen, her ration—the choicest bit of Little Bear, deceased, she has hidden away in a corner, and her eyes wander entreatingly from the pemmican on the food-box to each of us in turn.

“Here, Girly!” With a bound she is up on my sleeping bag. She is not demonstrative as a rule, but to-day she is quite beyond herself, whining, and trying to lick my face, her eyes fixed on mine all the time with an expression of entreaty impossible to resist. “I say, Iversen, hang it all, you know, I’d rather give her mine!” But fortunately we’ve dog-feed enough still, and Girly gets her pemmican and retires, while Iversen sticks his head out of the tent and calls Bruin. He comes up at the double, and we take him inside to avoid any ill-feeling among the others, but not being so well-behaved as Girly, he is turned out again as soon as he has eaten his pemmican. Gøjs gets his too, and then, having eased our consciences, we can start cooking supper for ourselves.

18th April.—Another idle day. We might have guessed it, from the distance we covered yesterday, nearly twice as far as two ordinarily decent days’ sledging, and that sort of thing doesn’t happen two days running—we might get spoiled, and expect too much. So we comfort ourselves with the thought of yesterday’s run, and hope for the morrow.

19th April.—Our hopes are disappointed—it is blowing a perfect hurricane. The wind comes tearing down over the brow of the hill with such force that we are in continual fear of the tent being blown away. But it stands fast,

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nothing happens, not the slightest incident to break the monotony of the weary day. It is half-rations to-day for man and beast—the dogs don't like it—but neither do we for that matter. This is rough luck, and we are wondering what we have done to deserve it.

20th April.—Spent the night shifting and turning uneasily in our sleeping bags, hour after hour without the slightest change—save when the snow melts under us, and the water collects in the hollow, soaking through skin and fur, which is anything but pleasant. But the dogs are far worse off even than we, for there is not snow enough here to cover them up, and they are exposed to the icy wind, which must freeze them to the marrow. They are restless, flocking together in a clump, then quarrelling and snapping at each other, and yelping faintly all the time.

The sky above is clear, and the sun is shining down on us through the driving snow. The gale is evidently only local, for the barometer is steady, and has remained so both before and during the storm.

All day we lie with the map spread out before us; far to the north there is a little point marked off—that is where we ought to have reached by now with fair average weather. We measure distances and make calculations: we shall be lucky if we are able to get back to the *Alabama* before sledging becomes impossible. It is a cheerless day, and I pass the time telling Iversen of the trials and tribulations of other Arctic explorers—there are those who have been worse off than we. But before long we shall be pretty badly off ourselves, for we are using fifteen pounds of fuel and provisions per day, even with the small rations, and the time will come when we shall have to pay dearly for these days of idleness.

21st April.—I once sailed with a skipper who every

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time we were becalmed—the worst that can happen to a sailing vessel—began by giving us extra work to do. But if the calm lasted, he used to get a holy spell and preach long sermons to his pious crew. One day when we had had twenty days of calm—I wish we had some of it here!—and he had tried the usual methods without effect, the mate, to our surprise and delight, instead of turning us out to work, gave us all a holiday. This was something new, but there were more good things to come. At breakfast, dinner and supper we were treated to the best of everything on the ship. I recollect distinctly how we all prayed that it might last. But it didn't. The very next day the Lord had mercy on our sorely-tried skipper, a breeze sprang up, and once more the work went up, and the grub down to normal.

I have been trying part of his experiment to-day, giving the dogs full rations, and we are now hoping for prompt reward, though I have no doubt the dogs are thinking just as we did—if only it would last for ever!

For the gale is still raging—the landscape is completely blotted out—and this is the fourth day.

I remember somewhere having heard or read that there was some good to be got out of every possible situation, however bad, if only one knew how. We have come to the conclusion that all this is really first-class education in the art of being patient. And so we practise patience for all we are worth—it is a bit hard at times, but we manage fairly well, and we ought to be past-masters in the art by the end of this trip.

22nd April.—Blowing all night as usual—but towards morning it calms down a good deal, and soon after nine o'clock we start off, after four long days in camp.

We make fairly good progress at first, in spite of the fresh breeze, which is still dead against us. But the dogs

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have suffered very much during the four days' storm, and soon after starting out from camp, I notice that one of my dogs, "Convict," a youngster, but big for his age, is beginning to be shaky on his legs. I stop and examine his paws; there is nothing the matter with them, and we go on again. But something is evidently the matter with Convict, his legs give way under him, and every now and then I am obliged to stop and help him up. We keep on like this for about an hour, then suddenly he falls without any warning: a kick or so, and he is dead. Poor old dog—he has worked himself to death, but we can't afford to waste even the little meat still on his bones: the carcass is skinned and flung on the sledge.

A couple of hours later another one begins. This time it is "Fritz," one of Iversen's dogs, about the same age and size as Convict, and while we are discussing whether to kill him out of hand or let him go on till he drops, he settles the question himself by giving up the ghost. It makes an unpleasant impression on us, this second death from exhaustion and fatigue—two dogs gone in one day. We comfort ourselves, however, with the thought that it is not our fault; the hard weather is most to blame.

We had hoped and expected to get a good day after the four days' idling, but we are disappointed, the going is bad, the worst we have had since our companions left us. The surface is fairly level, but it is a stiff pull uphill, and the layer of snow is different to anything we have yet encountered. It is perfectly level, but hard and rough as cement, and the sledges drag very heavily. The dogs can find no foothold, and several of them have hurt their paws, while the claws become worn by continually sliding over the hard snow. And although the dogs are obedient enough, there are limits to their endurance, and after seven hours' hard work it is impossible to make them go any farther. Once they have stopped, they will suffer anything rather than start

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hauling again, and even on a sledge trip one has yet a certain amount of human feeling. We camp long before the time, and the dogs fling themselves down as soon as their harness is off. It is the first time we have not been able to drive ten hours, and this is no doubt due to fatigue and exposure during the many days of storm. We have also been too sparing perhaps with the provision, and make up for it now as well as we can, by giving them the two dead beasts besides pemmican. They need all they can get, for twelve dogs have now to do the work of fourteen.

23rd April.—The ice and the wind have evidently agreed to put a stop to our further progress—the going is the same as yesterday, heavy beyond all words, with a stiff upward slope, and the wind, the curse of our existence, gives us no peace day or night.

With fairly decent weather we could certainly make a pretty average day's journey over this ice, but the resistance of the wind almost doubles the work. We are tiring our dogs to death and getting nothing in return; we take every chance that offers to get a little way forward, but the wind hinders us all the time, until men and beasts lose courage at last, hauling day after day in the teeth of the wind and the driving snow. We know how much depends on our getting forward, and it is exasperating to think that the weather, which in all probability is merely a casual misfortune, will force us to spend the summer on the coast.

But it is no use complaining. We must make the best of it—but we don't feel very cheerful, when the wind again forces us to camp after only five hours' sledging. We have made about four miles to-day, at the outside, and yesterday the same; it is bitter to have to be content with—even thankful for—such miserable distances, which cost us more work and more trouble than fifteen miles a day in fair weather.

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24th April.—Idling again ! The storm is howling outside ; all day we lie thinking over our disappointed expectations.

Will it never end ?

25th April.—Breaking camp, packing sledges and hitching up dogs in twenty-six degrees of cold is no nice job even under the most favourable conditions, but with a gale of fifteen metres per second it is fearful work. As a matter of fact it is no weather for sledging, but as the wind has gone down a little since four o'clock this morning, we cook our meal, try to fancy that it is clearing up, and start—only to regret it half-an-hour later.

It is as well we did, however, for soon after the wind veers round so much that we can rig up a sail on Iversen's sledge. It is sharp by the wind, and the sail keeps flapping, but it makes a difference, and we get along pretty well, for my sledge goes fairly easily and I have no difficulty in keeping ahead of him.

When things have been going wrong for a long time a very slight change for the better is enough to raise one's spirits, and in spite of the fresh breeze still blowing, we are both cheerful enough, for the ice is level, the going good, and we are getting along faster than we have done for a long time. Everything seems to promise a good day's run, and we laugh in pure delight of anticipation. It is so long since we have felt like laughing at all, that we get quite boisterous over our little bit of good fortune.

We laugh at the ridiculous figure cut by Iversen's sledge under sail, it looks for all the world like a crazy old lugger with a heavy deck-load, crawling across the North Sea with its sails all anyhow. We laugh at Visken, who has taken it into his head to play the goat, and firmly refuses to pull against the wind, but hauls away to leeward for all he is worth. We sit down on our sledges and hold our

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sides when "Pigtail"—one of Iversen's dogs, which I had borrowed for the day, as his sledge went so easily—discovers the change, and doesn't like it at all. She has followed long enough in the wake of my team to see that promotion to the leading sledge is not a thing to be desired, and when I give the word to start, she sends up a hoarse bark as if in horror, turns calmly round and begins hauling for all she is worth in the opposite direction, almost holding the other dogs back. In vain I try to reason with her—she only barks louder and louder, and Iversen sits on his sledge behind, fairly doubled up with laughter. She won't have anything to do with me, that is evident, and her protest seems to us the funniest thing in the world. Any other day Miss Pigtail would have been severely punished for her behaviour, but it looks like a good day's run for once, and it is so long since we have had anything in the shape of encouragement ourselves, that we are far too happy to be down on a dog. She gets her own way, and goes back to Iversen; I get another dog, who doesn't seem to mind so much, and still chucking over the incident, we continue our way over the smooth, level ice at a speed of nearly a mile and a half an hour.

The wind holds, the ice continues good, and the only thing that troubles us is the sight of some long white clouds, stretching out like tentacles across the sky, with a little dark cloud as centre down over the southern horizon. We know what it means only too well—another day's idling to-morrow. Higher and higher the long white arms stretch northward over the blue sky, like a mighty beast, intent on barring our way. How we hate these clouds, which never bode us any good! But the day closes without mishap, the storm has not yet arrived and we camp after ten hours' driving, a good twelve miles north of our last halting-place.

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26th April.—The clouds have kept their promise, but it is not so bad as we expected after all, for in spite of the storm, which lasted all night and far into the day, we managed to get a few hours' sledging between 6 p.m. and midnight.

It is impossible to get much out of a day when one starts so late, especially when there are several inches of loose snow on the ice, but we are thankful for small mercies, we get along somehow, pleased to get a few miles out of a day which we, to begin with, had reckoned as lost.

The weather, however, is not such as to tempt us to keep on all night, for although the sun is now above the horizon day and night, there is yet an appreciable difference in the temperature, and we feel the cold keenly. The dogs howl with delight on seeing us stop, for their inner man is well aware that it is long past supper-time, and they are quite ready for their pound of pemmican—for we have increased the rations in order to lighten the sledges.

The extra food seems to be giving the dogs new strength, and the increased rations will soon—too soon—make the sledges much lighter. This means that we shall be obliged to trust to the proceeds of the chase, as we have only enough dog-feed for thirty-two days. Of course several of the dogs will have died of fatigue before then, and the provisions will really go further, which is just as well, for it is not a cheerful prospect to have to depend on our guns for food in a country, and on a coast, where Mylius Erichsen, even with the assistance of a native, could not get enough to live on.

27th April.—Things are beginning to improve, the ice has been better for the last few days, the snow is not so hard, and the dogs can find their foothold. The wind is against us, of course, but we are getting accustomed to that, and as long as it isn't actually blowing a gale, we don't mind—much. And we have really been fairly lucky the

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last few days, we have made good progress and have passed the range of small nunataks which stretch northward from Dronning Louises Land almost to Pic de Gerlache. These nunataks are all of the same formation, low and rounded, and there is little doubt that in former days the inland ice flowed out over this obstacle, which now more or less effectually checks its progress towards the coast.

Instead of the low, rounded nunataks we have now and then seen, away to the north, some high, rugged peaks, and of late every time we have reached the top of a hill we have expected to be able to see out over the whole country. But it was not until this afternoon that we got a view of the high and desolate mountain country which rises steeply from the surface of the inland ice. It is an imposing mountain landscape, especially as we see it to-day, with heavy clouds above the highest peaks, but we are not a bit pleased to see the land at such close quarters, for we are afraid of the fissures in the ice, which we shall certainly encounter now that we have got nearer to the land than we expected.

After Iversen's accident with the sledge we have naturally conceived a horror of these fissures, and keep a sharp look-out for even the smallest cracks, examining every suspicious bit of ground before taking the sledge across. Fortunately, however, we have had no wide cracks for some days, and one can get used to anything in time, so I dare say we shall soon have forgotten that the earth—in this case the inland ice—is generally considered as the very emblem of solidity, and become accustomed to the thought—exceedingly unpleasant as yet—that the surface may give way at any minute beneath our feet.

We have not got so far as yet, however, and when we reach the top of a high hill whence there is a good view of both land and ice, we give but a casual glance at the beauty of the country, the nature of the ice occupying our full attention. The horizon does not look promising, it is rugged

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and indented—and that probably means cracks, but after all, it may be only a trick of the ever-present and ever-busy mirage. We use our glass carefully, without being able to come to any conclusion save that discretion is the better part of Arctic exploration, and that it is wisest not to take unnecessary risks. We shift our course accordingly in order to avoid the treacherous ice—if treacherous it be.

We are now descending toward the bottom of a small valley; the ice is good and we make first-rate progress, camping before nightfall abreast of a nunatak, which is only a mile or two long at the outside, but so steep and narrow, that seen from one end it looks like an obelisk, a thousand metres high, a mighty monument commemorating the violent convulsions of the earth in bygone ages.

28th April.—It is eighteen days since we had calm, and on coming out of the tent to-day, it is quite strange not to feel the wind or see the driving snow. It is calm, dead calm, not a cloud to be seen, and as a consequence the temperature is lower than usual, below twenty-four degrees. In spite of this fact, however, it feels warm and we are able to work without mittens, so that we are ready to start in half the time it otherwise takes us. Both we and the dogs are cheered by the fine weather, and with good level going we get along at a good pace, leaving the great obelisk and passing through a narrow sound between it and the big nunatak, and begin hauling up the big hill which we sighted yesterday, the one that looked so rugged and dangerous. To-day in the light of the sun, it does not look so bad, and we commence the ascent, not expecting to meet with any serious difficulty.

Scarcely, however, have we begun to indulge in these rash hopes, when I feel the ground giving under me so suddenly that I have barely time to shout to the dogs and catch hold of the sledge before a great piece of snow crashes

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down behind me into the depth. I get over all right, but Iversen is still standing on the other side and looking serious, for between us there is a fissure at least fifteen feet wide.

A bridge must be found, and this is no easy matter, for now that we know there is danger, we are so careful that nothing seems solid enough to trust. I go along the edge, trying everywhere with the ice-spear, until I find a place where the snow seems strong enough to bear the weight of the sledge, and Iversen drives forward. It is careful treading now, and shouting all the while, for the sledge must be kept moving at any cost; must not even slacken speed, or it will certainly sink through the treacherous snow and send him and the dogs to certain death.

He calls to the dogs, yelling and shouting and cracking his whip, holding on to the sledge all the time with his left hand. Swiftly he dashes over the bridge of snow, two feet thick, while I stand ready to give a hand in case of accidents. And while the air resounds with Iversen's angry shouts, I stand and call coaxingly to the dogs, promising them food and a rest and all sorts of nice things if they will only haul for all they are worth. 'And so, with threats from behind and fair words in front, they pull steadily on until the danger is past.

That was the first, but by no means the last. From now onward we encounter fissure after fissure in the ice.

We have not gone more than 100 metres before the same thing happens again; this time the fissure is so wide, and so thinly covered with snow, that we discover it in time, and turn off to the westward along the narrow strip of ice between the two hidden gulfs. Every time we reach a snow-bridge which looks safe, we cross, generally without mishap, but falls are unpleasantly frequent; we go through the treacherous snow and hang there, holding on the sledge. Time out of number we only discover the crack by noticing how Girly begins to lift uneasily on her feet; generally too late for us to turn the dogs off on to more solid ice without

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one or more of them falling through, to remain hanging in their harness. If it should break, should one of the traces be a bit worn, then the dogs would be dashed down beyond the reach of aid. It almost seems as if they scented danger, for every now and then they stop, and refuse to go on until the ice has been tested ahead. Possibly they can hear the hollow sound when they tread on unsafe snow—but be that as it may, it is fortunate for us that the dogs often discover a crack which might otherwise prove fatal to us or the sledges. My sledge is so long that there is not so much danger with it, but Iversen's is shorter, and consequently can go through at places where I have just passed over in safety, with no sign of any crack in the ice.

It is dangerous work, both for ourselves and the dogs, and before the day is out the yawning gulfs have claimed their sacrifice.

It is our old friend Mongrel, the funny man of the team, who has to suffer, and that at a moment when we had been driving for some time without any sign of a crack. Ahead of us lies a broad level plain, and we are beginning to think that we are out of danger for the time being, when suddenly I hear Iversen shouting for help. Two minutes before, when I last looked round, he had been close behind me, and everything all right; now his sledge has gone through again, for the third time to-day, and he is lying flat on his stomach looking down after it.

"It's gone!" I exclaim, noticing that the sledge has vanished, and hurry back to the spot. Fortunately, however, my fears turn out to be unfounded, for as I approach I discover the sledge hanging by the bows and uprights. Something else must be wrong, however, since Iversen lies there looking down the crack. No need to ask what it is, for now I can hear him calling: "Mongrel, Mongrel old boy, can't you hear?"

Heavens, think I, it's Mongrel fallen in. I lie down and

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listen, but in vain, all is still as death. Iversen looks across at me, pale and with moist eyes—"Poor old Mongrel," he says, "and I licked him this morning for stealing a bit of pemmican. If I'd only known, I wouldn't have spoiled his last bit of fun!"

We lie there staring at each other across the crack, the thing has given us a bit of a fright. It might easily have been one of us that had fallen down into this bottomless gulf that loses itself in darkness far below. But work is a good cure for unpleasant thoughts, and there is plenty of work for us here, for it is a heavy job to get the sledge with its full load up on to firm ground again. My dogs are harnessed to it, and a piece of pemmican is thrown ahead of them to invite them to do their utmost. This has its effect; in a moment they are all on their legs, yelping and tugging at the traces, with their eyes fixed on the little black spot ahead. "Mush then, ye beggars—that's right!" And they pull with a will.

And while the dogs are hauling for all they are worth to reach the pemmican, Iversen and I are working literally for our lives—for they would not be worth much if we were to lose this sledge. He lifts at the after end, and I pull at the bow, the sledge shivers, gives a little, coming forward in jerks, an inch or two at a time. Our muscles are cramped, our eyes grow giddy with the violence of the exertion, but now the sledge is getting under way, coming up, three or four inches at a time. Every fibre in us is strained to the utmost,—hang on another second,—and the sledge is balancing on the sharp edge of the ice. Slowly the fore-end comes down on to the solid ground, and it is done.

Mongrel was one of our best dogs, a good worker, and hard as nails. He was one of the veterans from the Lambert's Land Expedition, where he got his name. He was in every respect our *enfant terrible*—among other little weaknesses he could never keep quietly to his place in the team,

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always bringing the rest into the wildest disorder, until one day we hit on the idea of hitching him up to the side of the sledge. There he had to haul all day in splendid isolation, and in the end it became his regular place, for he worked away there like a little horse, hauling twice as hard as before.

The fact was that poor old Mongrel was not very sharp, and always imagined he could catch up with the rest in time if he only pulled hard enough, and although he pulled and pulled for a hundred days without getting any nearer, he never seemed to discover why it was he never caught up with the rest. He lived in hope—and every time the sledges started after a halt he was sure that he was going to manage it this time. He bounded forward in the traces, yelping and hauling till his legs bent under him, only to discover, next time we stopped, that he was no nearer than before. Then he would stand and look for a bit at his more fortunate companions, who could lick and play with each other, after which he generally twirled round impatiently once or twice, before curling up in his lonely little corner, still convinced that he would get there next time.

It was a post of some danger Mongrel had got, for now and then the sledge would go over his paws, and he had grown to regard the runner as his personal enemy. It was for him a living thing, that was always on the look-out for a chance to hurt him. He kept a watchful eye on it all the time, with a wrathful glance as though to say, "Mind what you're up to now," whenever it came too near, and barking loudly every time he saw it rise up from the ice, for then he knew it was ready to bite—hard. Worst of all was when the sledge went down in a crack, for then he couldn't get away, as was painfully demonstrated to-day.

But it is no use thinking any more of poor old Mongrel, or in cursing the fissures, which spread out fan-wise towards us from some ice-hills a little distance to the east. We must be more careful in future, that's all.

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It looks as though the hidden perils were at an end, for the fissures are drawn straight as if with a ruler, and from high up, towards the top of the ice-hill, far down its sides they are free from snow, so that we can see them distinctly and trace the direction of the crevasses. We can now drive on more or less confidently until the open crack begins to show at the end : then we know it is time to be on our guard.

Gradually, as we get farther away from the threatening ice-hills, the fissures grow fewer, but on the other hand much wider, and we drive over several which are more than twenty-five feet wide. The snow-bridge over such wide crevasses is not strong enough to bear its own weight, but sinks down in the middle, often a foot or more, which immediately betrays the hollow underneath. Naturally it is a good thing to be able to see the danger instead of driving into it blindfold, but that is the only good thing about it, for it is anything but pleasant to crawl out on a bridge of that width to test its strength. But it has to be done before we can trust our lives to it, so I pull myself together, tie a rope round my waist and give Iversen the other end. He sits down on the edge of the crevasse, with his feet braced hard against the solid snow, and hangs on to the rope, while I creep out, slowly and cautiously distributing my weight over as large an area as possible. Every time I drive the ice-spear in I can hear the hollow sound beneath me, and I know it means a fall of perhaps a thousand feet if the snow should give way. If the bridge holds up to the middle, we reckon that it is safe, and if it can bear me as I walk back, we reckon we can take the sledges over. Slowly and cautiously I get up, stand a moment, balancing on my feet to see if it will take my weight, and then back I go, while Iversen hauls in on the rope, I treading as heavily as I dare and trying not to think about what will happen if it can't bear.

We get the sledges over, somewhat to our surprise, if

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the truth must be told, for sledges, men, and dogs together weigh at least 1000 pounds. We drive over many fissures without mishap, and growing bolder, cease to think of the danger. There is a very broad one ahead, which I get over all right, but just as I am turning round to see how the other sledge is getting on, I hear a shout from Iversen.

As I look round, he is hanging down half-way through the snow of the bridge, of which a good ten feet has fallen away behind him. He clutches on to the sledge, which is still hanging over the abyss, but the dogs don't seem to notice anything, they simply go on pulling, and soon Iversen and the sledge are once more on firm ground.

"See that?" says Iversen, glancing back at the hole, and looking quite pleased with himself. "Near go, wasn't it? S'pose I'd gone off to join old Mongrel, what then?"

"Yes, it looked pretty bad—for a moment I thought you were gone. Well, I fancy we've both had about enough of work and excitement for one day; what do you say to camping? This place looks fairly good."

Iversen also has had quite enough for to-day, we are both tired out after ten hours' hard work, so we pitch our tent, hoping that the ground may be solid underneath.

29th April.—It is with considerable misgivings that we break camp and start off again after the experiences of yesterday, for there are cracks all round us now, and ahead, as far as we can see, are great crevasses stretching away to the west from the small ice-hills, a little to the east of the camp.

But fortune favours us, we drive over one broad crack after another without mishap, growing bolder every time we get across in safety. We have already begun to be careless in testing the bridges, and after driving for an hour without falling through, we have become so confident that we drive over broad fissures without testing them at all.

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It is foolhardy, and we know it, but there are bad days and good days; on a bad day we can take all possible precautions to no avail, while on the good days we seem to be under the protection of invisible powers, and manage to get through somehow, whatever mad things we may do. Then sledging is a pleasure, and with level ground, good going, and perfect weather into the bargain, we are content to rejoice at the good progress we are making and look cheerfully at everything. We laugh at the remembrance of the troublous days behind, and find life in general decidedly worth living. Even the future seems bright—if we think about it at all. The dogs, too, share in the general good spirits, they get a bigger breakfast than usual, and in the brief pauses for rest we lie down among our beasts, who know that they can take liberties to-day, which otherwise would be strictly forbidden. They lick our hands in delight when we pet them, and when the rest is over, and we start again, they are quicker and more willing than usual. Then off we go, quickly and easily, with Iversen behind the rear-most sledge, “singing,” as he calls it, his favourite song :

“What’s the good of grumbling?

What’s the sense of tears?

Don’t waste the minutes whining,

For minutes make the years.”

Well, he is not far wrong; it is a useful philosophy, at least. I let the lash wander lightly over the dogs’ backs. No need to hit them to-day, it is enough just to let them know that the whip is there. Hour after hour goes by, mile after mile is covered, and still the same level surface ahead.

Only to the eastward is there any sign of change. The ice-hills are left behind, and in their place is a great level snow-field, stretching away to the foot of the high, splendid nunataks, which continually change their appearance, revealing new landscapes as we pass them, at a speed of

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two miles an hour. We are quite delighted with the scenery, but in that respect we are easily pleased; it is long since we have been anywhere near land, and as regards appearance, almost anything is better than the weary monotony of the endless ice-fields.

There is general rejoicing as we camp this evening, for we have made over twelve miles to-day, and the sorry results of previous days have made us thankful for very little. The dogs are allowed to go loose, and get a small—very small—extra ration, after which we creep into our tent, delighted at being able to sum up the work and events of the day in the brief note: All well, splendid ice, fine weather, first-rate progress.

30th April.—We have been driving for five whole days without being stopped by storm, which is an extraordinary concession on the part of the weather, so we feel we cannot complain now that it is blowing a gale, which, by the way, is about as bad as any we have had. We eat our apples and pork, and feel very pleased with things generally, but we avoid looking at the map, for by this time, even with the worst ice we could imagine, we ought to have reached Danmarks Fjord, and here we lie, more than 120 miles from the nearest point on it.

Often we wish that we could lift the veil which mercifully hides the future; but what would have been my feelings last winter had I known that we should lie stormbound for fourteen of April's thirty days; that half the rest would be full of difficulties due to wind, bad ice, fissures, and all sorts of other misfortunes, and finally, that the total distance covered in April would amount to 105 miles in a straight line?

April has been bad—bad beyond all words—what has May in store? I wonder!

CHAPTER VII

DIARY—*continued*

Icing the runners—Better ice—The dogs exhausted—Sight land about Danmarks Fjord—Canine burglars—Rich country—Musk ox—Sledging over land—Reach Danmarks Fjord.

1st May.

THERE was once an old gentleman, Archimedes, I believe, who made a wonderful discovery while in his bath, and got so excited over it, that he ran out into the street, shouting: "I've found it, I've found it!"—entirely oblivious of the fact that he wasn't exactly dressed for paying calls. Last night I came very near to following the example of the venerable Greek, but thought better of it, and contented myself with giving Iversen a nudge, and telling him of the splendid labour-saving device I had thought of, viz. icing the sledge-runners. I had seen the Eskimos do it, and had noticed how easily the sledges went, but had never yet done it myself. But now we are going to try it, and all night I lie awake thinking of the little surprise in store for the dogs in the morning.

My enthusiasm is somewhat damped, however, by the time I have fairly begun the work, and I almost wish I had never thought of it, for dipping one's hand in water and coating the runners in twenty-two degrees of cold is anything but pleasant. But it has to be done, and by painting

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them over, so to speak, with several coatings of water, I get a layer of ice a good millimetre thick, and the sledges are ready for use. And I am well rewarded for my pains, for the sledges run almost by themselves for the first two hours, and we have been driving half the day before the ice begins to wear through. It saves us any amount of work on the road, and as the surface also is all that could be desired, we get along splendidly.

But even with the best of going, one can always have some disadvantage or other, and suddenly we are startled by feeling the surface sink an inch or two beneath us, with a crackling sound, as when one shakes a piece of heavy silk stuff. The snow-crystals sparkle and gleam as they change their position towards the rays of the sun, and we stop and stare at each other in astonishment.

What on earth can it mean? More fissures? That is our first thought, but we are soon reassured; the ice is good and solid, apparently at least, and there is no sort of danger.

It is nothing but the weight of the sledge, which has crushed down the upper, hardened crust of snow into the soft mass beneath, the crackling sound being caused by the breaking of the upper layer. It is perfectly safe, and we soon get accustomed to it, though I admit it startles us now and then.

The dogs are even more nervous than we, for like ourselves, they are in continual fear of cracks, and every time they feel the snow-crust breaking beneath their feet, the whole team gives a jump as if the ground beneath them were red-hot. Finding themselves, to their surprise still, above the surface of the ice, and looking round and seeing everything all right, they cock their tails in the air once more, and on they go at full speed to make up for lost time. For we are behind them with our whips ready—"Haul, ye beggars, never mind the ice! Go along, there's nothing the

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matter ! ”—and the lash plays gently over their backs, not hard enough to hurt, but just enough to urge them on. We know all about it now, but we can't expect the dogs to realise it all at once.

It is like sledging over a frozen sea, where valleys and hills remain to tell of stormy days long past. And as at sea, where one can lie in the trough of a big swell and see nothing but water on all sides, so here, we find ourselves surrounded by ice. Very different is the view from the crest of the ice-waves, whence we can see out over an endless perspective of ice-hills, while far away above the last of these, rise mountain peaks, like distant islands towering up out of the sea. It is new land, which has to-day made its appearance above the horizon, but in vain we try to find a hilltop from which we can get a full view of the land. We have been sledging for eleven hours, and the dogs are utterly exhausted, but by the time we camp we have made fifteen miles.

Glorious days, with good going and fair weather ! If only it would last, we should reach Danmarks Fjord in four or five days.

2nd May.—Patience is a virtue ; we must not be in too much of a hurry to reckon out how soon we can be there ; we are stormbound to-day, with a heavy northerly gale. And as the day drags on, we lie in our sleeping bags and look at the map, where the good runs of the last few days are clearly marked—in contrast to the pitiful distances of a week ago, which are scarcely visible to the naked eye. It has been a sorry snail's pace over the inland ice, but now it seems to be improving, and we hope also for better weather.

3rd May.—The storm has lasted all through the night, and not until noon is it quiet enough to make a start. But

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even then the weather is by no means good, a fresh breeze is blowing, and clouds are racing across the sky, which looks as if there were more to come.

However, the going is good, and the ascent nothing to speak of, so we have no reason to complain. We have got more or less accustomed to the wind by now, although it stings our faces pretty badly, and we get along at a good pace over the easy slopes.

During the afternoon the wind dies away, it is perfectly calm, without a cloud in the sky—but it seems impossible to get a really perfect day; there must always be either bad ice or a heavy uphill pull, lots of cracks, or bad weather. To-day it is cracks, and although they are too narrow for the sledges to fall in, the dogs are continually in trouble, sinking in every now and then through the thin crust of snow. Even when it bears the dogs, it won't always bear us, and we go through so many times to-day, that at last I lash myself to my sledge, so that I can't fall very far, unless the crack is wide enough to take sledge and all. There are so many of them that it is impossible to test them all, so we drive straight ahead, and trust to luck. But Iversen must be warned every time I pass one, and I shout out "crack!" every time I go through, turning to see if he has heard. No answer, and "crack!" I shout once more at the top of my voice—the short, sharp word acts like magic on the dogs—until from far behind there comes a faint echo that tells me he has heard.

"Know what you look like to-day?" asks Iversen, as we halt for a short rest.

"No, I don't," I answer shortly. "I'm too busy looking after my blessed dogs to think of looks. Nothing very pretty, I reckon?" for Iversen is chuckling over something evidently comic, and when he informs me that I look "exactly like a jack-in-the-box he had when he was a youngster," I am obliged to admit that he is not far

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wrong. Seen from behind, down one minute and up the next, and waving my arms all the time to the dogs, I must have cut a queer figure.

Fortunately the cracks are still narrow, varying in width from a few inches to two or three feet, so nothing happens to break the monotony of the day, save that Bock is so exhausted that he hasn't strength enough to lift himself out of a crack if he falls in. For the last few days Iversen has had hard work to drive him, and when we camp in the evening, after eleven hours' work—and fifteen miles nearer Danmarks Fjord—Bock's last journey is over. We take leave of him without any deep feeling of regret, for he was a poor dog, idle, greedy, and always the first to halt and the last to start.

4th May.—Cheerless as it is to be awakened by the noise of the gale, worrying and tearing at the tent, it is just as delightful to wake up and see the sun shining through the thin canvas, and listen in vain for the slightest rustle of wind. On such a day the preparations for the start are soon over. The pemmican is cooked and eaten in the space of half-an-hour, and by the time the tea is made we are sitting fully dressed on our sleeping bags, ready to begin the day's journey.

Things that otherwise would mean hard work and frozen fingers are but a matter of moments on a day like this; the sun's warmth acts like a tonic, and we are in high spirits as we take up our hauling-straps, crack our whips and start off. The brightness of the day is somewhat dulled, however, when, after an hour's driving, we find ourselves surrounded on all sides by broad cracks, but having now learned to tackle them with caution, we get over the dangerous ground without mishap. Soon after we reach the top of a hill whence we for the first time can see the whole of the land of which we caught a glimpse yesterday.

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It is high country, stretching away north and east, wild and mountainous, and furrowed by deep fiords. Fifty miles or more away we can see the steep slopes of Lambert's Land, while behind us the pyramid of the Pic de Gerlache and the steep peaks of the other nunatak rise sharply above the inland ice.

We can see far and wide over this desolate land, so imposing in its utter lifelessness, a great white surface, hard as glass and yet plastic and ever slowly moving, which only the highest mountain-top can pierce. And looking at these lifeless rocks, one's thoughts involuntarily turn to what lies beneath this mighty covering of ice, which keeps its secrets more irrevocably hidden than the very sea itself. Beyond the coast-land and the few nearest nunataks nothing is known: what mountains and what valleys there lie beneath none can guess; all is hidden by the impenetrable ice.

It is a beautiful and imposing sight, but so oppressively silent, that one feels an impulse to cry aloud, to strike the dogs until they howl, only to break the silence which broods over all we see, as it has done and will do for thousands of years. But the sledges glide forward once more, and the air resounds with our shouts and the barking of the dogs; for a little space waves of sound roll out across the virgin surface where silence hitherto has reigned supreme.

The day is drawing in, and the fine weather is at an end, for the long cirrhus clouds, our heralds of the storm, are trooping up from the south. It has been blowing already for several hours, and we are forced to stop earlier than we had expected—we have made at least twelve miles, however—in order to take observations and bearings of the land ahead. We must make the best of the opportunity, for there is no knowing when we shall get another.

If Arctic explorers had been known in Dante's time, he would certainly have provided a special icy department of

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the *Inferno* where it was always blowing a gale, and where unfortunate sinners were continually taking angles and altitudes with a theodolite—a suitable punishment for too ambitious travellers. I, at least, can imagine nothing more excruciating—until I have finished my measurements and can creep into the cosy tent, where Iversen at once thrusts a bowl of scalding tea into my hands. It warms one's fingers beautifully, and after drinking a pint or two, I begin gradually to thaw inside.

5th May.—The cirrus clouds have never yet played us false; we are lying up again to-day as we expected. It is particularly irritating, for it blows too hard for sledging, but not so violently as to preclude all hope of making a start. As a consequence, we lie all the time with an uneasy conscience, starting up every now and then, at the slightest sign of a change, and beginning to get ready. Three times we try, but every time the wind gets up again before we can make a start, and thoroughly disgusted, we creep into the tent, tuck ourselves up in our sleeping bags, and try to lull our conscience and ourselves to sleep.

6th May.—I have been lying in my sleeping bag all day, racking my brain to find words in which to express what I think and feel about the exasperating weather, but without arriving at any satisfactory result, and so the alas, soon hackneyed phrase, “lying up on account of storm!” must suffice, failing the stronger expressions which I should feel perfectly justified in using if I could only find them. It is a pity, though, for one might almost compete with King Lear in the storm upon the heath.

7th May.—It can't last indefinitely, however, and during the night the gale subsides sufficiently to permit of our making a start at 6 a.m. It is still blowing hard, and

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right in our faces; the snow is driving high, but we have had worse weather, and we bend to our hauling-straps, shielding our faces as far as possible from the wind, and urge on the unwilling dogs.

The ice is good and level, and hour after hour goes slowly on. Not even a crack to break the monotony—and we almost wish we might encounter one, if only for the sake of variety.

But we should be sorry to be taken at our word—and fortunately the wish remains unanswered. Nothing—absolutely nothing happens in the eleven long hours which it takes us to cover sixteen miles. This is a good day's run, and the dogs are all tired, Lady being too exhausted even to eat her ration of pemmican—and for a sledge-dog that is saying a good deal.

Pan and Foxy are also utterly fagged out, and unless we soon reach land where we can shoot some meat for the dogs these three will die, and others very likely also.

And the dogs are not the only ones who are feeling done up; both Iversen and I are tired and exhausted, getting out of breath every time there is a bit of extra heavy hauling, and after running even a short distance we have to sit down on the sledge to get our wind again.

We put it down to the considerable altitude at which we have been living for some time, but the explanation is not entirely sufficient; for 1200 metres is not enough, in itself to account for it.

8th May.—The weather looked so threatening last night that we were almost certain we should have another gale, but we did the weather injustice, for it is perfectly calm to-day. We are not sorry, of course, but it can't last very long, for the long, ragged, cirrus clouds are driving up fast from the south-east; there is a ring about the sun, which has no fewer than three satellites apparent, and the mirage is

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everywhere in evidence. Each of these signs is a sure warning of storm brewing, and we are not a little anxious as to what may come when all appear together.

The good weather holds, however, all through the day; the air is perfectly still, even oppressive, and as the going is splendid, with a considerable downward slope, we are making first-rate speed, better than on any of the previous days. And then at last we see the beginning of the end—the land about the base of Danmarks Fjord. One more day's sledging and we ought to reach the edge of the inland ice, and begin to find a place where we can make the descent.

We are longing to get down on to real land once more—not this eternal sledging up here between earth and sky. Men have no business here, but down on the coast, however desolate and unfriendly, one is yet among surroundings at least resembling those among which human beings live and move. And we are hopeful, trusting that fickle Dame Fortune will make us her special favourites, and send us something to shoot, however barren the place may be. Down there must be a Paradise compared to this Inferno of ice. Spurred on by our desire to reach the land, we urge the dogs to the utmost of their strength, and when at last they can or will do no more, we too have had enough, for it is hard work tugging at a hauling-strap for twelve hours at a stretch.

There is nothing to compare with the delight of resting after a thoroughly fatiguing day—we stretch our limbs luxuriously in our sleeping bags and soon sink into the strengthening, dreamless sleep of tired men.

9th May.—Once more we find ourselves pleasantly disappointed on waking. The signs and warnings of storm which we have hitherto regarded as infallible have proved entirely unreliable as regarded the last few days; to-day again, the weather is almost perfectly calm, in spite of

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yesterday's predictions to the contrary. Well, so much the better! And after taking a latitude which gives our position slightly to the north of 80° N., we strike camp. Iversen has got his sail up, and I have taken over three of his best dogs, so we dash ahead like the wind—no need for hauling-straps to-day. After five hours' driving we halt, apparently not more than a couple of miles from land. Right ahead, but far below us yet, we can see a narrow tongue of land reaching up into the inland ice for several miles in the direction of south-west, its surface being apparently level and almost free from snow.

From where we are, the ice slopes gently down towards the land, and as we are eager to set our feet upon real land once more, the temptation is almost too great. But we cannot overlook the danger of sledging overland for the twenty-five miles or so which still lie between us and Danmarks Fjord, and the possibility of obstacles which it would be hopeless to think of overcoming with the sledges. There is a lake, or a level glacier, away to the north-east, twisting and turning in and out among the hills; we can follow its course for fifteen or twenty miles, when it turns off to the north, or perhaps north-west, and disappears; but the sight of this white strip of ice, which looks so smooth and promising, is almost too much for all our prudent caution. But if it should turn out to be a local glacier, it would mean the risk of finding ourselves stranded on the top of some mountain or other—like the Ark on Ararat—which would be anything but pleasant. Should it, however, be a river—which is highly probable, since there must be an enormous amount of water produced by the melting of the great expanse of ice which stretches down towards the tongue of land—then it must have an outflow somewhere, and by following it we could easily reach Danmarks Fjord without sledging longer than necessary over the inland ice.

We examine it carefully through the glass—is it a lake

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or a glacier? It might be either, but we have got it into our heads that it is a glacier, and so great is the power of imagination that I fancy I can see a number of cracks across the white surface. Iversen sees them too, and this settles the question—we are not having any more to do with cracks than is absolutely necessary, so we turn away from the tempting land and prepare to tackle an ice-hill, at least 200 metres high, immediately to the west of us. From there we will continue to the north-west, until we reach the Fyn Lake marked on Høeg Hagen's map, which we imagine must be in one of the valleys whose upper slopes we can descry in the high land which bounds the inland ice in the far distance.

Slowly we work our way up the great slope by no means pleased at being obliged to sledge thirty or forty miles farther over this accursed ice; nor do our tempers improve when the wind veers round to get right in our faces. But as a matter of fact it is doing us a service for once; we drive right into a strong north-westerly gale, and on turning round to look out over the country I discover that its appearance has changed completely. We are much higher up now, and have a better view than before of the doubtful white stretch, which now presents so great a resemblance to a lake that we agree to examine it more closely before going any farther. There is no hope of doing so to-day, however, owing to the violence of the storm, which is now raging so furiously that it takes us nearly two hours to get the tent up—a piece of work which generally takes about ten minutes.

10th May.—It is rarely that the violence of a gale forces us to stand by ready to turn out at a moment's notice, but so fearful were the gusts which awakened us during the night that we hastened to pack up our gear and stuff our sleeping bags full of clothes, so as to be able to outride

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the storm in case of need. The wind goes down, however, towards morning, the weather looks fairly good, and we hope for a calm some time during the day. There are several things to be done, however, before starting, for the camp is to be left in charge of the dogs, which means that our gear must be packed away and as many of the dogs as possible tied up to avoid trouble during our absence.

The snow is driving still as we leave camp, but we have the wind at our backs, and we are too excited at the possibility of reaching land to care about the difficulty of the homeward journey, which will be pretty hard work if the wind lasts.

The land seems quite near, and we stride off with our guns over our shoulders, keeping our eyes open for any sign of musk ox. But we might have saved ourselves the trouble, for it is farther off than we had imagined; we march and march, but never seem to get any nearer. It takes us five hours' brisk walking to cover a distance which from the camp, appeared to be about three miles. We are both disappointed at having to go so far before reaching land, and our disappointment is increased when we at last reach the edge of the ice, only to find that it is impossible to get down on to the land, for the wall of the glacier is perfectly sheer, and at least 100 feet high. This would not matter so much if there were nothing to be gained by getting there, but, as it happens, we have every reason to wish to reach it, for we can now see distinctly that it is a lake or a river which lies before us, and not a local glacier full of fissures. True to its nature, the inland ice is placing obstacles in our way up to the very last. But it is no use standing still and cursing the lifeless ice; we move off along the edge to try and find a place where the wall is not so high, or a ravine, perhaps, deep enough for us to lower our gear down from the bottom of it on to the land. For three hours we search along the coast, but in vain. We could easily

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lower our things down fifty feet or so, but lifting it down over the sheer side of this ice-wall, a hundred feet at least, and ourselves after it, is not to be thought of. We content ourselves, perforce, with examining the country as closely as possible.

High up on a jutting point of the glacier we sit, gazing with longing eyes at the promised land, which lies spread out before us like a map. There is not so very much promise about it, however, after all; it looks barren and cold, half covered as it is with snow, and fenced by a hundred-foot wall of ice. But it is at least land, our true element, and we long to reach it, long to feel the crunch of stones and gravel under our feet, and to walk over the low, rounded hills in search of game. Most tempting of all, however, is the river winding away between the hills to disappear far to the north—a good, safe and level road to Danmarks Fjord.

It took us eight hours to get out here from the camp, but the homeward journey is even longer—never, I think, have I been so tired as I am some ten hours later, when we at last sight the little tent which covers all our household goods, and seems to us the cosiest spot on earth.

We are already looking forward to a rest after our hard days' work, but gradually, as we near the tent, an uncomfortable suspicion dawns upon our minds that all is not as it should be. One of the dogs has broken loose, and is running backwards and forwards with every sign of conscious guilt, while those who are still tied up are howling and barking at the top of their voices.

We are more or less prepared for the worst by the time we reach camp, but at sight of Pan's ugly head sticking out of the tent we realise that it is worse even than we had feared.

Our first thought is for the dog-feed;—Pan's guilty looks clearly indicate that something has been happening in that

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quarter—and sure enough, one of the cases, which was intact when we left the camp, has been torn almost to pieces, and half the pemmican—fully four-and-twenty-pounds—eaten. A moment we stand there staring at the havoc, and perfectly dumb with rage—a quarter of our dog-feed gone—and we had taken special care to give the brutes an extra good meal before we left, that they should not be tempted by hunger.

“Ungrateful beasts, you shall pay for this!” Pan is still standing inside the tent squinting at us with his one half-blind eye, and I make a dash for him. Howling and yelping he is hauled out and handed over to Iversen, who is standing behind me like a wrathful angel, armed with a whip, ready to receive the culprits. Pan is securely bound, and after we have caught Lady and Tæven I crawl into the tent to see the extent of the damage.

Everything is turned upside down, our sleeping bags dragged about the floor; the dogs have been making merry with a vengeance! Gøjs has found a nice warm corner deep down in my sleeping bag, where she now lies comfortably snoring. One more delinquent is still in the tent; Girly, lying in her usual corner, rolled over on her back with all four legs sticking up in the air. She waves a lazy, languid paw at us in her most fascinating manner. Girly is perfectly aware that she has stepped aside from the path of virtue, and that she will have to pay dearly for her share of twenty-four pounds of pemmican.

A brief pause in the yelping outside tells that Iversen has finished with the education of the other three, but there is more work for him yet. “Hi, Iversen, I’ve got two more of them in here!”—and a moment later Girly and Gøjs are undergoing a similar course of instruction in morals.

The havoc is awful to see. Pan has borrowed Iversen’s sleeping bag, and neither his nor mine is exactly sweet smelling, but we are not squeamish, and content ourselves with taking off the covers and hanging them up to dry and

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air. Now we can begin to reckon up the extent of the damage, which is considerable. The food-box is upset, and licked perfectly clean; the oil-stove, which is generally covered with rust and grease and drippings of pemmican, is polished bright: mugs, pots and spoons are likewise licked clean inside and out. Everything eatable has disappeared. Two pounds of pemmican have vanished together with a lot of biscuits, the dried vegetables are nowhere to be seen, and after the meal the beasts have treated themselves to a little dessert, in the shape of a pair of kamick-stockings, part of a sleeping bag, all the walrus-hide straps from Iversen's snow-shoes and the entire length of my whip-lash, which was eighteen feet long.

This last was a piece of extravagance which will cost them dear; they had better have left that lash alone. Thrashed they must be, and having eaten the lash, they can't complain at getting their punishment with the butt, which is considerably harder, and which Iversen handles with deadly effect.

The whole affair may perhaps seem to be scarcely worth making so much fuss about—twenty-four pounds of pemmican and a few odds and ends. As a matter of fact, however, it is pretty serious. Five dogs have eaten a quarter of all our dog-feed, in addition to which we shall be obliged to lie up all to-morrow, while the greedy brutes digest their stolen feast—which again will cost us ten pounds of pemmican for the rest of us.

Who is the ringleader it is impossible to say, but we strongly suspect Girly, who is now tied up outside the tent in disgrace, which she doesn't seem to like at all.

11th May.—There is nothing to be lost by going down again to-day to the edge of the inland ice to have another look for some way down over the ice-wall, for the dogs are still so overfed that it is hopeless to try and get them to

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move for the present. But we have learned prudence now, and Iversen stays behind in camp, while I go off to a little road in the ice, where there is a faint possibility of finding what we want—a snow-slope reaching from the surface of the ice down to the land.

I march rapidly down towards the beckoning land, the ice has a fall of over 400 metres, and out on the edge it is necessary to move with caution, for the surface here is polished smooth by sun, and wind, and water, making it difficult to get out on to the very edge of the glacier in order to see anything at all, and it means hanging on for dear life to the slightest irregularities in the ice. Fortunately, however, there are a number of small watercourses now filled up with snow along which one can creep out to the steep wall of the glacier, in search of possible snow-slopes, crawling back again on all fours until the steep incline is passed. Without these it would be impossible to get out to the edge.

At last, after several hours' search, I find a place which looks promising enough, but am obliged to content myself with observing it from a distance, for the slope is so steep and the ice so slippery that it is a question whether I could get back again up the incline without help from above, and I am not anxious to stay out on the ice until Iversen comes to the rescue.

I make a detour, therefore, of a couple of miles, in order to reach the other side of the cut, and from here I discover a great stretch of snow reaching from the bottom of a deep, but apparently fairly broad, watercourse, right down on to the land.

This looks good enough, if only we can get the sledge down to the beginning of the watercourse—and I hurry back to bring the joyful news to Iversen. Now one can forgive the dogs their little burglary of yesterday, for if they had not broken into the provisions and eaten so much that they

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were unable to move to-day, we should by now have been far away to the west, and perhaps have had to sledge along up here for days.

In spite of our forgiveness, however, they get nothing to eat to-day, their rations being divided among the other dogs. They don't lose much, however, for there is only dog's flesh on the bill of fare to-day, Foxy being no longer among the living.

12th May.—We were glad enough to get up on to the inland ice on the 24th of March, but that was nothing to the joy we feel to-day at the prospect of getting beyond the reach of inland ice and all its cracks within the next few hours. We lose no time in making a start. By ten o'clock we bid farewell to our last camping-place in the eternal ice, and dash ahead at full speed in the brilliant sunshine down towards the edge of the ice, and the longed-for land beyond. We sit on our sledges and shout to the dogs, who are tearing down with slack traces, and in less than an hour and a half we have covered the seven miles which lay between our camp and the last big slope.

Now we must drive carefully, or the sledges will get beyond control, but the dogs are not in the mood for going slowly to-day, they are much too fresh after the two days' rest, and scarcely have we started before the sledge is once more racing ahead like the wind, with five frantic dogs bounding along in front, howling with pure delight of speed, and myself behind, lashed to the sledge with my hauling-strap, doing all I can to check them, and threatening Girly with unheard-of tortures if she doesn't "Gee" at once, right now!

A loud bark is the only answer, as the dogs dash forward at a still wilder pace, and every moment we are drawing nearer with giant strides to the sheer precipice ahead. Already I can see the naked ice-hummocks which mark the

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edge of the glacier,—then suddenly my foot slips on a piece of polished ice, and falling, I am dragged along by the hauling-strap despite all my efforts to free myself. Nothing but a miracle can save us now, and I work like a madman to get free, while the sledge still tears along at ever-increasing speed, dragging me with it, now on my back, now flung face downwards, now bouncing like a ball over the hard surface of the ice, only to be buried next moment in a drift of snow, and dragged through it, leaving a furrow as if a snow-plough had passed.

At last I manage to slip the hauling-strap over my head, and lie there breathless in the snow. The sledge is still careering down the slope, half hidden in a cloud of snow : “Gee, Girly, Gee !” I shout at the top of my voice, but the dogs cannot hear, or what is equally bad, they will not hear. A few seconds more and sledge and team have reached the brow of a hummock, the last I see of them is the stern of the sledge high in the air—then it vanishes from sight, even the howling of the dogs is no longer to be heard. Aching all over, and still confused, with the breath knocked almost out of my body, I lie there trying to follow the tracks leading to the place where the sledge disappeared, and thinking regretfully of the poor beasts that are now, beyond doubt, lying crushed and mangled at the foot of the glacier. Suddenly I remember Iversen—he has been following in my wake all the time, thinking as likely as not that all was safe ahead—he must be stopped, and that swiftly. In a moment I am on my feet, dashing back along our trail, but before I have gone far, I see him running up towards me—fortunately without his sledge—calling out to know what has happened to my outfit.

“Gone—lost !” I shout back, beginning to rub my bruised limbs, and waiting for him to come up.

“Are you sure ?” he asks anxiously, as we walk down together. “Something might have stopped it, you know.”

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But I have distinctly seen the stern of the sledge disappear over a sharp edge, and am annoyed at the loss of Girly, Ugly, and the others. "Not much fear of that, do you think a sledge can fly?"

But scarcely are the words out of my mouth, when Iversen, who is a couple of yards ahead, gives a shout of joy. Cuts and bruises are forgotten, in a couple of bounds I am at his side. I can scarcely believe my eyes: ahead of us, scarcely seventy-five feet away is the wall of the glacier, but between it and us lies the sledge, upset, with Tæven lying underneath it, while the other dogs sit round with their tongues lolling out, their flanks working like bellows, and their eyes shining with delight over the splendid run. And Girly looks up as if to ask "Wasn't that well done?"

How the sledge managed to upset it is impossible to say, but Tæven is not a very fast runner, and has probably lagged behind, got caught under one of the runners and acting as a brake checked the way of the sledge so much on the one side that it overbalanced.

Cautiously we move down to the sledge, roping the runners to prevent it from slipping away, and lift Tæven out. She is unhurt—a sledge-dog can stand anything—but somewhat distressed, which is not surprising after being run over by a 600 pound sledge at full speed.

"Poor old Tæve, you did us a good turn there, anyway!" and we sit down beside her, patting her and caressing her, wondering the while how we should have managed if the sledge had gone, with rifles, petroleum, and a host of other things which would have been destroyed, or, at any rate, badly damaged by the fall.

We hitch up all the best dogs to the sledge, and cut steps in the snow to give us foothold, roughing the ice with an axe along the trail where the dogs are to haul. It takes us eight hours of heavy toil to get the sledge back over a stretch which had taken but a few minutes on the downward

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journey, and when at last the sledges are in their place at the spot from which we are to make the descent, we have had quite enough of that method of progression. Then we go off to reconnoitre. Our way lies down through a fairly broad, but very tortuous ravine, cut by the water from the melting of the ice in summer. From this a great stretch of snow slopes away right down to the land. It is too steep and too slippery to walk over, we are obliged to restrain our impatience until we have cut steps in the snow. Three hundred and fifty steps, of about two foot each, have to be cut before we reach the surface of the land.

It is possible to get the sledge down here, but it will cost us many hours of work, and we cannot resist the temptation to linger a while on the kindly earth, where we can move freely, without fear of hidden cracks. And this land, which a few days ago looked barren and desolate as the inland ice itself, is in reality almost a paradise. There are real willow trees full six inches high, with trunks almost an inch thick, blades of grass peep out above the snow, and when the ground is free from snow it is covered by a thick layer of moss, most inviting to weary limbs. But best of all is the high, beautiful heather, which grows in every sheltered spot, not fifty paces from the mighty wall of ice.

All these wonders, however, pale beside the discovery of a hare run close to the slope, and fresh tracks of musk ox in great numbers, besides the prints of foxes and wolves, their faithful followers. With greedy eyes we search the country round—think if we could get a musk ox! What a banquet we could make for ourselves by slaying one of these patient beasts, that lead so modest an existence up here, and have just passed through the rigours of an arctic winter. Unfortunately, however, none are to be seen. The sledges are waiting, we must leave the land, with its rich soil and its wealth of animal life—to crawl painfully up the hundred feet of snow that lead us back to the eternal ice.

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It is a long business getting down again with all our gear. Hour after hour goes by, it is long past midnight by the sun, and still we haul and heave and toil with our heavy sledges in the ravine, which slopes so steeply that we are obliged to lower them down with ropes and improvised tackle consisting of ice-spears, uprights, and spades.

13th May.—On either side of us are sharp, steep walls of ice, completely shutting out the sun, but in spite of the cold we work in our shirtsleeves, and even then it is warm. The sweat pours down our faces, our clothes are wet through with perspiration and the snow which falls on us from above, the sledges creak and groan as we put our shoulders to them, trying to twist them round a sharp turn, and once or twice we have to cut the line, and let the sledge force its way through a difficult place by its own weight. At last we reach the end of the ravine, and now there is only the snow-slope to be got over. We look down it, wishing that we could cast the sledges loose and let them race down the steep incline—it would be over in a couple of minutes—but we dare not risk the damage which the shock at the bottom would inevitably wreak. We pass chains round the runners of my sledge, plant Iversen's, which is heavier, firmly in the snow, to serve as a pulley, and now we are ready to begin. Everything we possess in the shape of rope and straps has been knotted together to give as long a run as possible, but it doesn't make more than a hundred yards altogether. Iversen pays out the line, and I walk beside the sledge, ready to give a hand in case the line should break.

Soon the end of the line is reached, my sledge is turned over on its side, and then the heavy sledge has to be let down with the aid of such poor tackle as can be improvised from sticks thrust down into the snow.

It takes us four stages to get down the slope, but at

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last it is over; our journey over the inland ice is at an end, and the way lies open to Danmarks Fjord.

It is past six in the morning by the time we camp, 460 metres below our last halting-place. We have been working without food for nearly twenty-four hours, but we are so overjoyed at having escaped at last from the inland ice that we do not feel weariness or hunger. For an hour we stroll about, enjoying to the full the delight of treading solid earth, perhaps also with some secret hope of meeting a musk ox. We meet none, however, and soon return to our tent, where in a little while pemmican is served. But now fatigue begins to tell on us, we are almost too tired to eat, and we end by falling asleep with a spoon in one hand and a half-finished bowl of pemmican in the other.

The consciousness of our new surroundings haunts us, however, even in sleep, as did the uneasiness we felt among the cracks of the inland ice; we wake again after a few hours' sleep, and at three o'clock I leave camp and start off to look for a good road through the hills down to the river.

We have often talked about how splendid it would be to reach the land; conjuring up in our idle hours all the wonders and delights which were to be found there; more perhaps than we really expected to find. That sort of thing usually means taking the best of things in advance, and the reality, when reached, seldom comes up to one's expectations. This time, however, the reverse is the case. It is impossible to describe the intoxicating delight of this feeling of safety with which one steps out over firm, solid earth—the lurking horror of those hidden cracks now nothing but a nightmare passed. Splendid to feel the springy carpet of thick moss beneath one's feet—and then a rifle at one's back and the keen joy of the hunter on the alert for game. . . .

The little dwarf willows of the Arctic seem just as beautiful as full-grown trees, and the grass—was there ever

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such lovely grass ! Some of the stalks are as much as a foot long. Drinking in the beauty of a vegetation which men accustomed to regions less barren than the Arctic might overlook entirely, I march rapidly forward ; the land looks good and full of promise everywhere. There is a road by which we can easily get the sledges through the hills—which looked inconsiderable from above, but at close quarters prove not a little higher. There are tracks of musk ox, too, and many of them not more than six hours old. We shall certainly have no lack of game now that we are sledging over land. Thoroughly content with the world in general, I scarcely heed the fact that my eyes are beginning to trouble me—until everything becomes vague and misty about me. A touch of snow-blindness ; but two pairs of snow spectacles and a bandage over the worst eye will put that right—sufficiently at any rate to enable me to steer my sledge.

When I get back to camp Iversen has prepared a little feast. He has opened a new case of provisions, in which we find two cigars, that Laub had packed away as a surprise for us. They are pretty badly damaged, but we fix them up somehow, and are soon enjoying the rare treat of a good smoke, together with the further delight of looking at the pictures in an old number of an illustrated paper which had been used to pack them in. The sheets are greasy and torn, but we put the pieces carefully together—here is reading matter for many days, even though we take a little foretaste of it now by glancing at the text here and there. There are bits of several stories, with neither beginning nor end, but that doesn't matter—we make up the rest ourselves—a splendid way of passing the time, and an excellent subject for conversation on lying-up days. There are articles of a semi-scientific nature, which we read through carefully and critically, and even an account of a tour over a glacier in Switzerland. But all that can wait, we pack everything

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away again, and make ready to start, we must do our sledging by night henceforward, for the sun is too hot in the middle of the day.

It is past midnight, however, by the time we start off with our sledges and turn our backs upon the inland ice, to commence our first day's journey over land.

The journey is but short, only an hour's sledging, for just as we have come through a pass between two hills and out to a fairly broad plain, where Girly can steer by herself, leaving me free to nurse my aching eyes, I hear Iversen shouting out something about cows. Cows, think I—he must be dreaming of his ancestral farm!—and I walk calmly on with closed eyes, until Iversen comes running up to me, and asks if I can't see the two musk oxen—pointing at the same time to something which to my half-blinded eyes looks like a couple of big stones. I can't see that it is musk ox, but Iversen can; he is fairly dancing in his eagerness—look, look—can't you see them moving? But I can still see nothing but two black stones, and have to trust to Iversen's eyes. He leads the way, and we close in upon the so-called musk ox, he turns off to get on their flank, and fires, I following suit. Musk ox it was, and the one falls at the first discharge, while it takes six more shots to finish the other. Both are bulls, Iversen can see the cows on a hill close by, but there is no need for further slaughter—we have more meat here than we need. We shall have at least 200 pounds of fresh meat on the sledges, and it is a long job cutting up the big beasts. At last we have got all we want, and the rest is handed over to the dogs, who are wild with delight at the unlimited amount of meat.

Never have I seen dogs stuff themselves to such an extent. We give them each a hunk of meat weighing about four or five pounds, to take the edge off their appetite, but this vanishes in a trice, and then they start in on the carcasses and eat till they can eat no more, flinging themselves

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down to sleep beside the meat, ready to tackle it again as soon as they wake.

Sharp barks and loud snores assail my ears as I sit in the tent dropping cocaine into my smarting eyes, annoyed at being unable to go round and watch the delight of the dogs getting all they want for once. Iversen is continually on the move, thrusting a lump of meat at a sleeping dog, or trying to separate two combatants who are not yet too full fed to quarrel and coming into the tent every now and then to tell me how enormously they are feeding.

We also feel we have deserved a feast, and the steaks which Iversen has cooked are done to a turn, and taste delicious, even though I am obliged to eat with both my eyes tied up, holding the warm, greasy meat in my fingers, for we have no forks, and a sharp-pointed hunting-knife is an awkward weapon to handle blindfold.

15th May.—Fortunately my eyes are much better after a few hours' sleep, and the first use I make of my newly-recovered sight is to go round with Iversen and look at the dogs, who are still revelling on the fresh musk ox meat.

We let them eat their fill, for they have well deserved it. But some hours later we are obliged to call a halt, for their stomachs are enormously swollen and hard as stone, though they do not seem at all inclined to stop eating, and we dare not let them go on any longer. Moreover, we can't stay here for ever, and must think about getting on. But there is no moving the dogs until they have digested their enormous meal. They are dragged away, much against their will, from the remains of the meat, but they are too tired to make much trouble, and soon fall asleep. Leaving the dogs to lie and gasp in the heat of the sun, we go off to feast our eyes once more on the richness of the land. It seems as if we should never tire of the tiny trees and the grass and the thick moss; there is always some new and delightful thing to see.

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Wherever there is snow we see the tracks of musk ox, hare, and ptarmigan, and more of wolves and foxes. These last are by far the most numerous; their tracks lie fresh in every direction, all meeting at the carcasses of the two musk oxen, which are now picked almost clean, and lie like the axle of a mighty wheel, the spokes of which are formed by the tracks of animals, all in straight lines towards the centre.

The news has evidently been noised abroad, invisible beacons burn on every hill, calling the beasts together from far and wide, to partake of the feast as soon as we leave the ground. Some of them do not even wait so long, for one great wolf has been right into the camp and eaten his fill side by side with the dogs. We have not seen him, but the tracks show that there have been visitors while we were asleep. There has been no fighting, so friend wolf has evidently been politely received and entertained; after all, the wolves and the dogs are distantly related—sort of cousins several times removed.

At five in the afternoon we leave our camping-ground and the rest of the meat to the original inhabitants of the country, and start off once more towards the river, still overland, and still close under the hundred-foot wall of ice which but a few days ago seemed impossible to pass. For some distance we follow the edge of the glacier, at the foot of which lie great masses of ice that have crashed down from above, until we reach a small watercourse, and drive along between a number of little islands, whose steep banks bear eloquent testimony to the enormous masses of water which must pour down from the melting ice during the brief summer.

The islands are low, and almost entirely covered with heather, already beginning to show green. It looks inviting, and as it is Sunday, and our first day's sledging since we left the inland ice, we have a good excuse for a rest, apart from the fact that we really ought not to sledge at all to-day,

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for the dogs have not yet had time to recover from twenty-four hours' hard feeding. They are able to move, but a halt would do them good, and they get it—a whole hour's rest—while we treat ourselves to a cup of tea, lying luxuriously in the high, thick heather and trying to feel the warmth of the midnight sun.

16th May.—On again, between the low, rounded islands, richly carpeted, some eighteen inches deep, with heather and remains of plant life, following the course of the winding river and taking a short cut overland where possible, until at last we reach the great sheet of ice which covers the lake. It is broad at the end nearest the inland ice, ten miles or so across, and the land about it is low and gently sloping, but farther on the lake grows narrower, and the land higher and steeper.

We camp after a thirteen hours' day, having covered sixteen miles, still without reaching the farthest point which we could see from the inland ice.

By six o'clock the same evening we are off again, and after a few hours' driving we pass the farthest limit of the land which we have seen up to now. Here the lake falls away more to the northward, widening out again at the same time; but the going is heavier now, as there is a lot of fine sand on the snow.

Here we see the inland ice for the last time, lying along the whole length of the southern horizon, but we have no desire to linger over the sight, and bid farewell to it and all its disappointments without any great regret, and with not the slightest desire ever to set foot upon its treacherous surface again.

The whips crack, the dogs start off, and we swing round the point; the land closes in, the inland ice has disappeared; ahead, behind us, and on all sides only the land is to be seen—the high, kindly land, revealing new beauties at every step.

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We are sledging along close in to shore—when suddenly we discover a herd of musk ox up on the sloping bank, scarcely a rifle-shot away. We halt, and sit down on our sledges to gaze at the splendid beasts, who seem perfectly unaware of our presence. They are playing, apparently, but their play looks dangerous enough to the uninitiated; they charge at each other with their horns, meeting with a shock that can be heard from where we are, and the weakest is sent rolling down the slope. Then they feed on placidly for a while, until they think it time for another trial of strength, and dash at each other again with such force that their heads and shoulders rise high in the air, until one or both loses his balance and topples over.

Our sledges are full of meat, and we cannot carry more, but the sporting instinct is so strong that the musk ox are in serious danger for a moment. Five full-grown animals there are, and a tiny calf—all perfectly unconscious of our presence. Our fingers are itching to get a shot at them, and we cast about for an excuse.

All men have more or less of the hunting instinct in them, and up here, where the struggle for existence is so hard, it wakes, perhaps, more easily than in milder regions, where a kindly Providence has filled earth, air and water with living things. There it is scarcely justifiable to shoot a great beast merely to satisfy such instinct, but here—who knows but we in a few days' time may find game scarce, just when we need it most, and regret that we did not take it when it was to be had? This thought it is which makes us weigh the life of the beasts and our longing for the chase in the scales.

What do we want with more meat? Is it worth while to burden ourselves with another fifty pounds' weight? All seems in favour of letting them live—but only for a moment. What if we were to halt, and shoot one—just one—and give the dogs another feed? The fate of the musk

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ox is trembling in the balance—but there is the watch to be consulted. We must not do anything rash, and we dare not sacrifice more than half a day. We discover that we have only been sledging for four hours, not even half a day—that settles it, the musk ox are saved—and can think themselves lucky to have seen bloodthirsty human beings at such close quarters and yet escaped alive to tell the tale.

We are quite proud of our generosity, but it is to be hoped that virtue will be rewarded by the finding of game when we need it more than we do at present. By way of farewell to the unsuspecting animals we send up a mighty shout.

The echo resounds among the hills, and the astonished animals stop their play and lift their heads to gaze at the mysterious beings who have thus suddenly appeared in their domains. Not until the shout is repeated, however, do they see any necessity for shifting their ground. The calf is taken in charge by two old cows, and slowly and majestically they amble off up the hill-side and disappear behind the crest.

17th May.—So intent had we been watching the musk ox that we had for a moment forgotten our fear of being unable to get out by the road we are following, but it soon recurs, and we hurry forward to find out for certain what our prospects are. The land is closing in ahead, without the slightest indication of any continuation of the lake, and the unpleasant possibility that we may have been led into a trap is no longer to be overlooked. We shudder at the idea, for if the lake should turn out to be enclosed by high land on the farther side, then there is only one thing to be done—back again, up on to the inland ice once more, and over it, to find another doubtful place and make a new descent. This would cost us time and toil, and dogs, but it certainly looks as if we should be forced to do it, for now we cannot get much

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farther, and there is no opening ahead—of that we are perfectly sure.

After some hours' sleep we are to climb a big hill due west of the place where we camped this morning, both of us very tired after a fatiguing night. We take the dogs with us, and an empty sledge, to prevent all possibility of further burglaries, and for half-an-hour we drive across the lake. The ascent is steep, we slip on the hard snow, stumbling also over loose stones, which roll down the hill-side, tearing others with them. We climb in zigzag fashion, taking advantage of every ledge, and hanging on to the heather and tufts of grass; it is hard work, but at last we reach the top, which is worn round and smooth by the inland ice of former days.

Here at the top the earth is bare of vegetation; grass, willows and heather cease at a height of almost 300 metres; above that only a few kinds of moss are to be found, and not even these modest plants can live on the top itself. This, however, we do not notice until we descend; for the present we are too busy studying the geography of the country to pay any heed to our immediate surroundings. But when at last we see Danmarks Fjord lying there below us, with a good road overland leading to it, we breathe freely once more, rejoicing at our good fortune and the splendid panorama spread out before our eyes.

It would need a poet's pen to describe it—a sailor is but a poor hand at such work. He may say, perhaps, that a thing is beautiful, wonderfully beautiful; he may even in his enthusiasm called it d——d fine—which is quite enough to relieve his own feelings, but not sufficient to give others any adequate impression of the warm, golden sunlight over the inland ice, the cold blue that wraps the distant mountains, or the confusion of rounded mountain-tops rising like great domes one above the other in strange contrast to the steep, almost perpendicular sides, with their irregular, many-coloured strata which would delight the eye of a geologist.



IVERSEN'S SLEDGE



MUSK OXEN

[To face page 178.]



THE LAKE



CAPE HOLBÆK

[To face page 179.]

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Only a poet could paint in words the long, narrow lake, lying among the high, steep hills, and Danmarks Fjord with its dark, sheer cliffs, and, loveliest of all, the fresh, pale green of the nearest hills—a colour so faint and fine as to seem an effect of light—a part of the spring one feels and hears all around.

We lie up there on the mountain-side looking out over Danmarks Fjord, made tragically famous by the sad fate of Mylius Erichsen, Høeg Hagen and Brönlund. We see the high Sjællands Fjælde, and the steep promontory of Cape Holbæk, bathed now in sunlight; but our thoughts go back to that sad autumn when those three men came in with their sledges, wretchedly clad, dangerously short of provisions, and with exhausted teams, but still confident of reaching their ship at Cape Bismarck. What must their feelings have been as they moved about the desolate land, not smiling then and kindly as now in spring, but dark and inhospitable in the cold light of the fading year? Were they prepared to meet the fate that lay in store for them, or did they fancy, with the optimism so common among Arctic explorers, that now at last they were nearing home and soon would be beyond the reach of cold and darkness?

It is difficult to understand how they managed to get up on the inland ice, and where; for in autumn, when the snow is partly melted, one would imagine it must be impossible to climb up, for instance, where we made our descent. And Brönlund writes in his diary of the low glacier near Fyn Lake—the dead, motionless glacier, from which no ice falls down on to the land. Where is it? We cannot see it, it must have been an optical illusion—it must be impossible to see the inland ice from the base of Danmarks Fjord.

Poor fellows, what must they have felt, when, after sledging all those toilsome miles out of their way, they reached the inland ice at last, only to find, instead of the

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easy ascent they had expected, a sheer wall of ice a hundred feet in height ?

But their lives were at stake, and under such conditions the impossible often becomes possible. Up they must and up no doubt they came, however improbable it may seem, but where and how we shall never know.

We sit there still awhile, pondering fruitlessly over the fate of Mylius Erichsen and his companions, but we dare not stay too long up here, and with a last glance at the beautiful scene around, we commence the descent. We soon reach the sledge—it is easy enough to stumble down a hillside, and off we go at top speed for the camp.

18th May.—It is easy work driving with an empty sledge, but quite another thing when both are loaded and have, moreover, to be hauled up over a 50–75 metre slope. Then it is slow going, and the driver has to put his back into it, or the sledge simply stops. The dogs are doing all they can, but it is one of the hardest pieces of work we have had to get up to the top of the slope. Here we find a whole series of small lakes, separated one from another by banks of gravel about ten metres high. Down the slopes and over the glassy surface of the ice we glide without the slightest effort, but up the slopes, with the sledge almost standing on end, it is all lifting work, and at times almost beyond our strength. By united efforts, however, we get the sledges across the lakes, drive over the last stretch of level land, and stand at length on the edge of the last slope, the steepest and far the highest of them all—but at its foot lies Danmarks Fjord. We are a little anxious about letting the sledges slide down, but we must trust to luck and try—careful now, dogs—no need to pull here—for once ! I bound along with giant strides beside the sledge, then the rope by which I am holding breaks, and a few seconds later the sledge comes to a standstill on the level ice of Danmarks Fjord.

CHAPTER VIII

DIARY—*continued*

Along Danmarks Fjord—The first cache—A message—Mylius
Erichsen's camp—Unexpected news—We turn back.

18th May.

WE are on our way down Danmarks Fjord, following the western coast and sledging close in to land, for now we have at last reached the ground where our search is to begin in earnest.

This is a very different thing from sledging up there on the eternal inland ice; the ice here is solid, the snow-covering might be worse, and then there is land to look at, high, splendid land. It is good to be here—but not so good after all as we imagined when we were up there and let our imagination have free play. Then Danmarks Fjord appeared to us as something of an earthly paradise, where sledging was pure delight, instead of the hard work it now turns out to be.

For the dogs are tired; their strength is ebbing out. They take no interest in anything, they haul idly and wearily at the traces, stopping at the slightest obstacle. We are obliged to help them continually, and the moment we cease our efforts the dogs notice it, and stop hauling, turning round and looking at us as if to say, "Why should we do more than you?"

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It is natural perhaps, from their point of view, but we have to keep an eye on the coast all the time, nothing must escape, every strange-looking stone must be examined, not so much because we think it might be a cache built by the unfortunate explorers, but because it might turn out to be game—musk ox or hare; and we need meat, for our supply is now almost used up, and the dogs are beginning to want more food than we can give them.

19th May.—We must get food for these poor beasts who are dependent on us; we examine the coast and the hill-sides with the utmost care, but it is a barren stretch of country here, and does not seem to promise much in the way of game. We pass Cape Holbæk, going at full speed over fine, glassy ice, enjoying now for the first time something of the ideal sledging which we have been looking forward to and talking about up there on the inland ice. It does not last long, however, for as the land begins to slope more gently down towards the coast, the smooth ice ceases, the hauling-straps are again called into use, and shouting breathlessly at our weary dogs, we haul our sledge out along the fiord, still following the coast.

20th May.—A breeze comes up, blowing outwards towards the mouth of the fiord, and with this at our backs, we rig up sails on our sledges, and dash along at full speed. There is no need to examine the land for marks of man or beast, no traces of either are to be found on the precipitous cliffs which we are now driving past, and which rise in places to a height of four to five hundred metres. It is an imposing sight, with parallel streaks of various colours breaking the monotony of the sheer wall of rock.

The ice is free from snow close in under the cliffs and we make good progress, without over-tiring the dogs, but in spite of this we do not get as much out of the night's work

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as we ought, for towards morning the fog comes driving down upon us from the mouth of the fiord, loose clouds at first, which cling to the uppermost peaks, closing in gradually on us from above, until at last the fog engulfs us quite, we cannot see ten paces ahead, all is wiped out in cold and clammy mist. At last we camp—for it is useless to move blindfold here in Danmarks Fjord, where we most need to use our eyes.

Fortunately the fog lifts towards evening and we drive on again, leaving the high steep cliffs behind at last, and reaching Hjærtøjfjælds Valley.

It is a contrast to our recent surroundings, the country here lying so low that we cannot be sure whether we are driving over land or ice. It rises, however, gradually up from the coast, being bounded by a range of high hills a couple of miles inland.

The going is, to put it mildly, execrable : the snow is a foot deep, and loose and wet into the bargain, and the sledges stick as though glued fast. After a time we try driving over the land ; this is better, but we have to make wide detours to avoid bare patches, and if we had not been out of breath we could have shouted for joy when at last the hills once more closed in upon the fiord, and the going consequently improved.

21st May.—We have used the last of our fresh meat, and although we have plenty of provisions, we must either find game or kill one of the dogs, for little Pigtail is utterly worn out, and unless she gets meat she will die. We reach the Sjælland Plains and camp early, in order to look for musk ox. It was here that Mylius Erichsen found so much game ; perhaps we may be equally fortunate. But the plain looks anything but promising, being perfectly white, covered everywhere with snow, and if we did not know that game had been seen here, we would swear that there was nothing

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to be found. But there have been musk ox here, and we might find one or two—one would be quite enough; we don't ask for more.

Hour after hour we march round, ploughing our way through the soft, deep snow, which has piled up in deep drifts under the shelter of a number of big stony hills. It is hard work, but we see no sign of musk ox, and at last, utterly tired out, we are forced to return empty-handed.

Poor dogs—it is they who suffer most. Dog's flesh is never a delicacy at any time, but nevertheless they howl with delight on seeing us busy flaying and cutting up the carcase of their old comrade Pigtail. She was absolutely beyond further work, and arrived in camp as a passenger, lying on one of the sledges, so it is an act of mercy to put an end to her sufferings. Still, a dog is a dog, and if only we could have got a musk ox, the meat would have brought her round in no time. It is hard to have to kill even a useless dog for lack of meat. A week ago we let a whole herd go because we had no immediate need of their meat, hoping that we should be rewarded for sparing their lives by finding game when we needed it. But our hopes have come to nothing; we have not seen a single beast since then, and it is no use our vowing death and destruction to every living thing we may encounter for the future; that doesn't help us now. So Pigtail dies, and is neatly carved up into rations for the dogs: each gets his share, and all are now hungry enough to eat it, even those who wouldn't touch it unless they were half starved.

After a short rest we go on, annoyed at having wasted a day. The snow is soft, the dogs slack, and our spirits generally depressed. Things don't seem to be falling out as we had expected, and our minds are full of anxious thoughts as we march along beside the sledges, pulling like horses ourselves, and helping the dogs all we can.

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22nd May.—We are sledging close in to the coast, keeping a sharp look-out for game on the hillsides. Suddenly I halt my team, shading my eyes against the bright sunlight. Out there, ahead on the shoulder of the cliff jutting out towards the fiord, is something strange. Sharp and distinct it rises up from the rock, standing out clearly against the sky—is it a musk ox, or—what can it be? No animal, surely—it is too motionless for that. A chance formation of the rock, or can it be a cache, built by the ill-fated expedition? It is right in our course, but still some distance away; we must reach it soon, and then we can examine it more closely. The whips crack, the dogs tug at the traces. “Mush! on with ye, get on, ye beggars, what are ye waiting for?” Slowly the sledges get under way, moving heavily and awkwardly in the deep snow, while shouts of men and yelping of dogs echo among the hills. Every five minutes we stop to examine the stone, or whatever it may be, through the glass, and the wildest guesses are rife as to what we may find.

At last we reach the spot, and turning my glass once more upon the high, pointed stone I can see that it is a cache. This we had scarcely expected to find here, and with a couple of bounds we reach the land, in a fever of excitement to see what it may contain. Fragments of driftwood are scattered all about, one great piece, a whole tree-trunk six or seven feet long, lying at the foot of the cache, from which I imagine that the latter must have been raised to mark the spot where they had collected their firewood, before the snow covered all the shore. This is the first trace we have found of Mylius Erichsen and his comrades, the first sign of human life along the great fiord, in this beautiful but fearfully desolate land. As a matter of fact we have not the slightest hope of finding anything in the cache, but it is easy enough to build it up again afterwards, so we may just as well see if it contains anything at all.

By lifting a couple of stones we can see right down inside

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it, and to our astonishment we discover a shot cartridge lying on a flat stone almost on the ground. Will it tell us anything? Is it perhaps a message from the ill-fated men, or merely a word from the one who had found the driftwood, left for his companions? We fling the stones aside, right and left, and in a few seconds we have reached the cartridge, which is securely closed.

We thrust a knife point carefully down into the wad with which it is closed, but this sticks fast, we must try another means, and Iversen dashes down to get a tin-opener. This is better, and with it we cautiously cut open the cartridge, not knowing whether it contains anything unusual, or if it is merely an ordinary loaded cartridge. We are not left long in doubt; inside the cartridge is a paper, tightly rolled up; we get it out of the case and flatten it out on a stone.

The writing is perfectly legible. It is a report written by Mylius Erichsen, and runs as follows:

“ Danmarks Fjord, 81° 25' N.

“ 12th September, 1907.

“ Hagen, Brönlund and undersigned, all in good health, leave this place, called Ulvebakkene, to-day, with one sledge and seven dogs, to commence our return journey to the ship over the new ice which to-day is at last safe. Since leaving our summer camp, about eleven Danish miles¹ from here, on the 8th of August, we have had to kill seven dogs for food for ourselves and the remaining dogs, and lay for sixteen days on the sea ice, about half-a-mile from land, stopped by the water from the melting ice. At last, on the 25th of August, we reached land and shot four hares. Have since moved our camp about eight miles in all, in to Danmarks Fjord, moving by short stages, and continually hindered

¹ One Danish mile—about four English miles. The term “miles” is to be understood as meaning Danish miles throughout this report.

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in our progress towards good hunting-grounds by mild weather and impassable young ice, and at last by *open* water from coast to coast. Wandered on foot over the hills, followed by the dogs, eight miles further up the fiord to Sjællands Slette, shooting in all fifteen young ptarmigan, fifteen hares, one wolf, and eight musk ox (two bulls, three cows and three calves), camping for a week in the open air, cooking with the aid of driftwood, of which we found plenty along the coast. Fed the dogs up and brought meat and tallow down to this place, which is the most southerly point on the fiord which we have been able to reach by sledge. Ice further in still unsafe, otherwise had thought of possibly returning via the inland ice from the base of Danmarks Fjord, to the fiord 79° N. Estimate temperature last week at up to 15° of cold (Celsius). Taking with us on the sledge driftwood for eight days' cooking and over 300 pounds of meat, being sufficient food for ourselves for sixteen days, and eight days for the dogs. Shall follow the bay for the thirty-six miles or thereabouts eastward to the outer coast, and with the aid of the depots laid down there last spring and by shooting bears we hope to reach the ship safe and sound in about five to six weeks.

(*sd.*) "L. MYLIUS ERICHSEN,
"Leader of Danmarks Expedition."

We sit down on a stone, discussing the contents of the report, and I silently echo Iversen's comment, "Poor fellows—so glad and hopeful here—and then—what they must have gone through before the end!"

Frightful indeed it must have been. Here at last they found what they had dreamed of all the summer, food in plenty; here they had every prospect of reaching home, had fuel and provisions—and then after all to end as they did!

The report provides matter for serious thought, for it upsets the hitherto existing theories as to the three men's

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having crossed the inland ice from the base of Danmarks Fjord to Lambert's Land. According to this they must have followed the outer coast, but how far? And where are we to look for their diaries? To the north of us lies still Cape Kronborg, where, according to Brönlund's dairy, they had laid down a depot, and then finally their summer camp—we may find something at these places, but this is doubtful now, for their prospects of reaching home seemed so good that they doubtless took everything along with them.

Høeg Hagen's sketch-map, on which several caches are marked, gives no indication of this one; the map must therefore have been made previously, at their summer camp—we may find something there. However, we shall be there in a couple of days, and it is no use speculating over it now.

Lady is dead. Now we have only seven dogs left, and there is no sense in taking more than one sledge with us. We decide to take Iversen's, as better suited to the sort of going we have now, and even though we still have over 600 pounds' weight to carry, it will doubtless be easier to get along with only one sledge, using all the dogs, and with two men to help.

23rd May.—It is still abominable weather, foggy, with now and again snow—not the fine, dry snow we had during the winter, but nasty, wet snow which settles on the ice and makes the going so heavy that we can scarcely force the sledge through it; for the dogs have no strength left, and we have to do most of the pulling ourselves. The outlook is anything but cheerful—we are still going north, and when we do turn back we shall have a long way to go before reaching the ship. Moreover, the fog forces us to camp nearly every day earlier than we had intended, for we dare not sledge in very thick weather now, lest we should pass a cache without noticing it.

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Fortunately it clears a little towards evening, and we can continue our way, but it is slow and heavy going, even after we have passed Gunnarstidal, and reached a stretch of coast where the cliffs rise sheer out of the ice, and the ice is smooth and clean close in to land.

24th May.—We are astonished at the great change which takes place in the nature of the country from the base of the fiord to where we now are. There the land was rich and fruitful, with grass and moss everywhere, and very little snow, whereas here it is frightfully barren: not a blade of grass to be seen when we land, and often we can walk quite a long distance without finding the least sign of any vegetation. Down at the base of the fiord, and as far up as Hjærtefjælds Valley, we found tracks of musk ox everywhere: here we see none, not even old ones, or at any rate very rarely. Even at the top of the hill we climbed, which was 410 metres high, we found far more vegetation and musk ox tracks than are to be found in the most sheltered spots here, and I cannot understand how it is that we have not seen a single ptarmigan, although we have found some prints; neither have seen any hares or even traces of them. There are an enormous number of foxes, however, and we can scarcely walk a hundred paces on land without meeting their tracks.

It is very difficult to determine where Cape Kronborg lies, as the coast is almost straight, with only a few points, none of them very prominent. The fog has lifted, however, enough to give us a sight of the opposite coast, and according to bearings from there, we ought now to be near the spot.

The high, steep cliffs have once more given place to a low foreshore, and as it looks a likely spot on which to find a cache, or the remains of the depot mentioned by Brönlund, we camp, and make a thorough examination of the place. We pass the low shore twice without discovering anything

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at all, and are obliged to give up all hopes of finding the depot, or any remains of it. We therefore continue on our way, following all the indentations of the coast, and keeping a keen look-out for game or caches on the way.

25th May.—We have reached a place which exactly corresponds to the description of the summer camp, and as we are anxious not to miss anything and perhaps be obliged to go back, we examine the ground carefully, but all the time with a sort of feeling that it is not the right spot after all. This intuition turns out to be correct: about noon the weather clears up, and we spy a cache farther on ahead. This must be the one marked “Brönlund’s cache” on the map, and we hurry forward to reach it while the fair weather lasts.

26th May.—At last we reach it—it is no great distance off, but the dogs are still as poor as ever, and it takes us a long time to drive even a few miles. After having made sure that we are really on the site of the summer camp, and having ascertained that there is nothing in the cache, we take a look at the lower land beneath.

It looks bare and desolate, it is hard to believe that three men and a score of dogs should have lived here but two years ago, but even more difficult to understand how they managed to find food all that time. This year at least the country is entirely covered with snow; there is not a single dark spot to be seen on the low, flat hills that rise one behind the other as far as the eye can reach, and it seems almost impossible that musk ox can find means of subsistence in this snow-clad region. The coast itself is quite low and flat, the snow has been carried away by the wind save in the many water-courses, where it is sheltered from the north wind, and now lies in deep drifts.

There are caches on every hill-top, placed there in all

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probability for purposes of triangulation, but where are we to look for a message among all these? Well, the caches must be examined, and while Iversen drives the sledge round along the coast, I walk across to the summer camp. As I approach it is evident at once that human beings have been here. Bits of rope are lying about, and here and there meat bones, but very few of these; a few pieces of mounting from a theodolite, and some fragments of cloth and tent canvas. That the place must have been a starvation camp at last is evidenced by the fact that most of these remains have been gnawed by dogs, though, as a matter of fact, on second thoughts I am obliged to admit that this does not prove very much, for a sledge-dog will eat anything, and seems to take a delight in gnawing at the most remarkable objects.

The only definite sign of continued human habitation is the fireplace, lying on a little rise, perfectly free from snow.

It is a primitive arrangement—the shoe of a sledge-runner stuck down into a big tin filled with stones. From the end of this a cooking-pot has hung down over a tiny hearth built up of stones. Some ashes are still lying about—partly of wood, and partly charred bones; and beside the fireplace lie a couple of dog-feed tins, filled with stones, but what they have been used for it is impossible to say. We turn out all the tins, thinking that they might contain something, placed as they are on a spot where they were likely to be seen, but find nothing in the shape of either papers or instruments. There is no more to be seen here, and we hurry up to the nearest cache, which is built on a little hill some distance inland on account of the low, shelving foreshore.

Here we find the second message from Mylius Erichsen, packed away in an empty thermometer case, and tightly sealed.

It runs as follows :—

“ Lieut. Hagen, with the Greenlander Brönlund and undersigned, left the north-west point of this land (about

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82° 04 N., 22° W.) on the 28th of May, 1907, after meeting Lieut. Kock's sledge expedition, which had reached the northern point of Greenland and was on the way back to the ship at Cape Bismarck. We drove westward with twenty-three dogs, until the 1st of June, reaching Peary's Cape Glacier, and discovered that the Peary Channel *does not exist*, Navy Cliff being connected by land with Heilprin Land. We re-christened Independence Bay, calling it Independence Fiord, and built a cache (containing message) on a low spit near Cape Glacier. On the way out through the fiord we discovered and explored two smaller fiords, Brönlund's Fiord to the north and Hagen's Fiord to the south-east, building a cache (containing message) near the last-named. Found also some old Eskimo tent-rugs.

"Suddenly the weather turned milder; deep snow and melting ice, lack of big game, and sickness and fatigue among the dogs hindered and delayed us on our way out, so that we did not reach here until the 12th of June. Further progress over the ice was then impossible. We had only fifteen dogs left alive, of which one has since died. We have lived since then entirely upon what we could shoot (seven musk ox, one calf, fifteen wild geese, four hares, three ptarmigan). Further surveys taken, and the natural history collections increased, especially flowering plants, and botanical and geological observations. Called the land Kronprins Christians Land.

"Being without further means of subsistence for ourselves and the dogs, not having got big game since 16th July, we must to-day—after having ferried ourselves across to the solid ice on a berg—leave here with fourteen dogs, two sledges and all our belongings, in search of some stretch of coast more rich in game, away from this region where absolutely no game is to be found, and which we have searched in all directions within a radius of five miles. Are all three in perfect health. We are trying to penetrate some

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miles farther down the fiord lying south-west of here, Danmarks Fjord, which we travelled over in May, and where we then shot numbers of hare and musk ox. If we succeed in obtaining a sufficient supply of meat, we intend to drive the 125 Danish miles or thereabouts back to the ship as soon as the ice is passable, which should be about the end of this month, and hope to reach there before end of September, with or without dogs.

“The caches built in the neighbourhood of this one were set up by Hagen for purposes of triangulation, and contain no messages.

“We will deposit messages as to our further fate in one or more caches farther down the fiord.

“8th August, 1907.

(*sd.*) “L. MYLIUS ERICHSEN,

“Leader of Danmarks Expedition to North-east coast of Greenland, 1906–08.”

If the first message found gave us food for thought, this second one is in no way behind it in that respect, for the sentence “Peary’s Channel *does not exist*” entirely upsets the plan we have been contemplating for the last month or so, viz. of going through Peary’s Channel westward to Robertson Channel. This we wished to do partly in order to reach “new land,” but chiefly because we should thus be enabled to get into touch with human beings sooner, and doubtless also with less difficulty than by going back along the east coast of Greenland.

Now, however, we must make a virtue of necessity, and follow out our instructions to the letter, for we dare not risk the long journey northward round Peary Land, more especially as our crossing over the inland ice has cost us more provisions and more dogs than we had calculated.

It gives one a feeling of uncertainty, thus suddenly to encounter an obstacle which effectively prevents the carrying

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out of one's plans; reason argues that one must make the best of the altered conditions, but the force of habit is so strong that one continues to search for possible ways of removing the unexpected check.

So with us now—we think in a circle, the centre of which is the fact that Peary has stood on Navy Cliff and declared that the straits were open! How is it possible? The only explanation we can find is that he must have been so high up that the low land which connects Navy Cliff with Heilprin Land appeared to him as the surface of an ice-covered sound, and that the islands he has charted as lying across the straits are the bare tops of some small hills.

Brönlund's diary also suggests this, and Mylius Erichsen's report states it as a fact; but Høeg Hagen has *not* marked it on his map, which is otherwise so accurate, and this it is which leads us to doubt.

Iversen and I lie beside the cache talking matters over. The weather is fine and warm, the sun is shining on the dark mountains around, and on any other day we should rejoice at the beauty of the scenery, but to-day we have other things to think of, and are only occupied with the one question—shall we go in along Independence Fiord and explore it, or not?

On reading Brönlund's diary the problem seems to be solved, for now that we have Mylius Erichsen's actual notes and the route accurately given, many things become intelligible which before had been difficult to understand. We are both of opinion that it goes to prove that Brönlund has driven round inside the bay, while Mylius Erichsen stayed behind at Cape Glacier. If the country were low, they would not be able to see it from there, and Høeg Hagen has very correctly declined to note anything on his map save that which he himself had seen.

The explanation seems satisfactory enough, but still we are not yet decided as to what to do now. For the

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present we will make another examination of the summer camp, and then sledge up to Cape Rigsdagen to see what the going is like to the west.

Our second examination leads to nothing, and we prepare to leave the place which has been the scene of these three men's persevering toil, partly in the cause of science, and partly to save their own lives in their long fight against starvation.

27th May.—We leave the summer camp, sledging along the long coast, which is free from snow, and camp at three o'clock in the morning a little beyond Cape Rigsdagen. The snow is soft, very soft; at each step we sink in up to the knee, and in view of the general condition—bad going, exhausted dogs, the lateness of the season and the long way back—we decide at last to give up our dreams of going farther.

In order to give a fairly true picture of Arctic work, I have hitherto related the events of our going in diary form. This method, however, I am now obliged to give up, as my notes only cover some few days more. My diary for the following months, which was left behind with all our gear on a little island in the Skærfiord, was eaten by a bear, and we found only the last pages. The following narrative is based upon Iversen's diary, which the bear fortunately left untouched, and was written at Bass Rock soon after our return, when the journey was still fresh in my mind.

CHAPTER IX

SOUTHWARD

Start for home—Soft snow southward—Dogs exhausted—I fall sick—On the inland ice once more—Reach the depot—No message—Southward along the coast—Still no game—Traces of Eskimos—A bear hunt—Following the open water.

OUR doubts are at an end—the die is cast, we have given up all idea of going westward into Independence Fiord. I should dearly like to make the trip, but last night I tried to thrash out the question by myself, as impartially as possible, endeavouring to think what any disinterested man, acquainted with the Arctic, would say to the attempt, with the result that I must own my hopes defeated. It would be too foolhardy. I dare not risk it. As matters stand we must follow our instructions, which are clear and distinct: Examine depot along the outer coast, if diaries, etc., not found in Danmarks Fjord.

By my side lies Iversen, asleep. We talked the matter over last night, and he declared that he was willing to go wherever I might lead. No one could ask more—and I know that even if I decide to turn westward he will follow me, cheerful and smiling as ever, although I am perfectly well aware that he himself asks nothing better than to turn back and try to reach the *Alabama*.

Once more I turn all over in my mind—yes, after all, it is best to turn back. I shake up my sleeping companion: “Hi, Iversen, wake up—we’re going back home!” In

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a moment he is sitting up wide awake in his sleeping bag, staring at me. "Back home—did you say home—or was I dreaming?"

"Yes, I mean it—I think after all it is the only thing to do." His face beams with joy at the words: it is easy to see that this is what he has been longing for. And no wonder—for we have been sledging now over the trackless ice-fields for nearly three months, toiling along in the teeth of the biting wind, against all sorts of obstacles and disappointments, and reached at last the place that was our goal—no wonder now that the words "back home" sound like music in his ears.

Swiftly we pack and get all clear to start, leaving behind us everything that we can possibly spare. It is not much, and the sledge is very little lighter than before, but still it seems to us to go more easily now than yesterday, when driving towards the north, for we have turned our faces homewards at last.

There seems to be some magic in the word, which conjures up a host of kindly spirits, all anxious to make everything seem bright and easy for us now. The distance to be covered seems shorter, and our eager fancy paints for us picture after picture. We see ourselves rounding the glacier to the west of the *Alabama*, see our comrades coming out to meet us, all well and happy—and then more pictures of ourselves on board the little vessel, getting ready for the homeward voyage. We talk of the work that is to be done. Iversen must have a man to help him clean and furbish up the engines, and already we begin to calculate how soon the *Alabama* can leave her winter quarters, and start upon the last stage of our journey home, the sea voyage back to Copenhagen.

Once more our thoughts take wing, and setting distances at naught, show us a picture of our little vessel, rounding Elsinore with a fair wind. We see the lovely Sound, and

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the great green trees along the coast, glance in at the homes where the message—"Alabama passed Elsinore"—now comes as welcome news so long awaited—and then one last splendid scene, where we are back once more at home among our friends.

All that lies between is forgotten—we do not stay to think of the pack ice, which may prove impassable, nor to remember that the *Alabama* has not yet shaken off the chains of winter; we forget that we ourselves have yet 750 miles to go before we reach the first stage on our journey—the *Alabama*.

Homewards—the word brings up innumerable pleasant thoughts and dreams, and for a while the kindly spirits rule our fancy, still painting scene on scene of pure delight, until at last the demons of doubt come trooping forth to take possession, and the word "homewards" has lost—at least for me—all its encouragement and charm.

What will you find when you reach home? comes the whisper of doubt; and again: It is a year since you left home—you know not what disappointment may await you. Or: Are you satisfied with what you found in Danmarks Fjord? Satisfied with that—or that—or that? The brain reels under the torrent of question upon question, until at last a host of doubting demons are shrieking in malicious chorus. Have you thought of the journey back? Have you thought of food—twelve days' provision for the dogs, and five-and-forty for the men? Have you thought of the weakened teams? Have you really thought of what the journey means—750 miles?

The voices cease—but they have done their work, the happy thoughts are gone, and in their place is only doubt of the work done and the results obtained;—that, and the seed of thoughts which soon grow up into one great and overshadowing anxiety.

But it will not help the future to nurse these thoughts

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of all the evil that *may* befall us, and I strive to catch once more and hold the brighter fancies of a while ago, but in vain. They are gone, fled from the mind that could not keep them, and there remain now only the dismal thoughts of all the hardships that we may encounter. I even damp in some degree Iversen's cheery spirits—for it is but too true, the journey home is like to be a matter of serious difficulty, and gives us food for serious contemplation.

Twelve days' dog-feed does not count for much on a 750-mile trip, and when that is at an end we must reduce our own rations and give the dogs our pemmican—of which we have fortunately about sixty pounds still left. But before that time we ought to have found game. Game—and if we do not find any? What about the time, too? Have we time enough? Is not the spring already too far advanced to leave us any real hope of reaching the ship before the summer comes and puts a stop to all sledging? This is perhaps the worst difficulty of all. To-day is the last day of May, the same date on which Capt. Koch left Cape Rigsdagen. But we have 100 miles farther to go than he had; he had to some extent a track to follow—or knew at least the road he was to travel; knew when the going was good, and where he might expect to meet with difficulties. He had depots along the coast and could travel light, and what was not the least essential, he had a score of dogs or more. And yet he was hard put to it to win through—shall we, then, succeed? We must travel faster than he did, we must carry all our provisions with us, we know nothing of the ice or the going, we have but seven dogs, and all are exhausted.

Well, we hope to succeed, though prospects certainly look anything but bright, and as we sledge southward along the coast we talk soberly enough of all the various conditions to be taken into consideration—prospects of game, what going we are likely to find, the state of the dogs; but in

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spite of all, Iversen remains unshaken in the belief that we shall reach the ship in time, and looks cheerfully at the days and weeks to come.

On arriving at Mylius Erichsen's old summer camp we leave the west coast of Danmarks Fjord and begin sledging away to the eastward, towards the most northerly depot of the Danmark Expedition, but it takes some time to cover the 100 miles between the two places, and not until the 10th of June, thirteen days later, do we reach the spot where the depot should lie.

The going is a most important factor, and we have been very anxious to see how it would turn out in Danmarks Fjord. We drive as fast as we can. But scarcely have we left the coast before we get a taste of what we have to expect; less than 1000 metres from land we drive into deep, soft snow, and by the time we camp on the first day, it is evident that the dogs are even more exhausted than we ourselves.

Visken is utterly worn out, he can just manage to walk, but that is all. But he is Iversen's favourite, and we spare his life, for we may find game at any moment now, and meat in sufficient quantities can yet pull him round and in a few days make a good strong dog of him again. Until then, however, he gets next to nothing in the way of food—only what we can spare from our daily ration—being unable to work, he is not entitled to any food. This may seem perhaps but poor charity, but we are acting for the best. Pan can work a little during the morning, but later on in the afternoon he is so utterly tired that he lies down in the traces to snatch a few seconds' rest before he is urged on again. And Gøjs, the indefatigable, hauls now in poor old Mongrel's place, for we can reach her there without disturbing the other dogs; we can see what she is doing there, and she hauls away as well as she can. But it is not exactly a post of honour, and poor Gøjs is by no means pleased. Ugly and Tæven

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work fairly well, as long as we keep an eye on them, but Girly and Bruin are our hope and comfort, being apparently as strong as ever, in good condition, and not a whit less willing.

It is heavy going through the deep, soft snow, and we can only travel by short stages, for the dogs cannot stand the hard work, and as their lives are valuable we must spare them as much as possible. We help them along, of course, as well as we can, but this is not much as far as I am concerned. Each day I feel myself growing more and more exhausted, feel my strength gradually ebbing out. What it is, I do not know, and do not think about it much, for that matter, for we have up to now contented ourselves with the explanation that my swollen and tender ankles and knees, as well as the big, dark spots on my limbs, are all due to that last day on the inland ice where the dogs ran away with me and upset the sledge. This explanation we find entirely satisfactory, although some of the spots are in places which are not generally exposed to knocks and bruises—but I was pretty roughly handled that day, and any way the explanation is good enough for us—at present.

We make a careful examination of Prins Frederiks Islands, thinking that possibly Mylius Erichsen may have built a cache there, if forced by open water to sledge down along the eastern coast of Danmarks Fjord, but the three tiny low-lying rocks are soon explored, and we find no cache, nor any trace of their ever having been visited before.

Then we sledge off to the eastward again, out towards the low northerly point of Prinsesse Dagmars Peninsula.

It is frightfully slow work, and growing slower every day, for the snow gets deeper, softer and wetter as we go on. We are walking all the time up to our knees in snow, the dogs sink in till it is up to their bellies, and though we might find even this bearable, if only the sledge would keep above the surface, it becomes unendurable when it rides on the

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bottom boards all the time, heavy as though laden with lead.

We try the sea ice, but its surface is so bad that we are glad to get back on land again—it can't be worse, and indeed the snow is better, but we are obliged after all to edge out once more, for there are innumerable watercourses to be passed, and it is almost impossible to get the sledge up their steep banks. For a while we keep between the two extremes, with land on the one side and sea ice on the other; we keep above the tidal cracks, and hope for a moment that we have found the golden mean at last, but it proves a vain delusion after all—here again the going is too risky, we sink deep down into the tidal cracks, which are already fairly broad, and the invisible holes between the many pressure ridges and grounded ice-blocks.

We move out once more on to the sea ice. It is bad beyond all words, but as everywhere else is worse, we try to make the best of it, accepting the deep snow and slow progress as part of the day's work, and comforting ourselves with the thought that the going must soon improve.

Much to our delight the fog forces us to take half a day off. We have only been driving for a few hours, but both we and the dogs are tired out, and sorely in need of the rest, which we can now enjoy with a quiet conscience. Wherefore we refrain from cursing the fog, as is our wont; on the contrary, we liven up as it grows thicker and thicker all about us, and when at last it is impossible to go on any farther, we lose no time in finding a sheltered spot in a water-course on the eastern point of Prinsesse Dagmars Peninsula, where the tent is soon pitched, and the pot on the boil.

But the time is past when a few hours' rest would give us back our strength; we were tired when we camped, and we are tired when we start off again, to begin the month of June with the hardest work we have had as yet. The snow is soft, and deeper than ever, but covered with a thin crust

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from the night frost. The crust is strong enough to bear the dogs, and thus makes their work easier, but that is all the good it does, for we go through, and the sledge also, the latter often sinking so deep down that the snow stands six or eight inches above the bottom boards. The runners are continually cutting through the hard crust, which has to be broken up in front of the sledge, and our shins are barked almost to the bone, for we have to break through the crust of snow, one or two inches thick, with our feet.

It is heavy work with this sort of going, and it needs all our efforts to keep the sledge on the move when it threatens to stop, which happens continually, and to start it again when it has stopped dead, which happens more often than is at all pleasant. It is hopeless to try and move the sledge before the snow-crust has been broken up in front and patted down flat with a spade, and when at last we have got the dogs up on their feet again, ready to give a hearty heave and get on the move once more, we feel ourselves sinking down into the slush, until we stand on the firm ice beneath, with the snow up to our waists. Now at last we can put our backs into it. The dogs howl and we shout—encouraging them to make a mighty effort—and slowly the sledge gets under way. But we ourselves have managed to get out of the frying-pan into the fire. Before it was the sledge which was stuck fast; now it is we who cannot move, but stand there rooted to the spot in the deep snow. We must snatch at the moving sledge, to haul ourselves up by its aid, and if we miss it, we have to wade through the snow until we reach it. It never goes more than a few paces, however, for the dogs are astonishingly quick to discover that they are pulling all by themselves. This they are quite convinced is too much for their strength; they stop and look round in surprise. They will only pull as long as we are at their heels, with our hands on the sledge; even though we are not making the slightest effort, they

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imagine we are pushing, and manage splendidly until they encounter an obstacle. But if we for any reason lag behind they give it up, and then the job of starting—a task of endless toil—has to be done all over again.

Add to all this the fact that the ice is anything but level, so that we often have to get the sledge over pressure ridges of considerable height, covered with very soft snow; that Pan cannot pull, and Viskén can hardly walk, and finally that I myself am but little better than our worst dog, and it is not surprising that we sigh for the hard snow of the inland ice, in spite of the cracks beneath.

The unspeakable badness of the going is perhaps best illustrated by the following entry in my diary: "Camped after only seven hours' work, and made but 200 feet in the last half-hour."

It is a bad night indeed, but the next is worse, for the temperature has gone up to 3° C., in consequence of which there is now no crust on the snow, and even though this same crust was a doubtful advantage, it could still bear the weight of the dogs, and give them a chance to work. Now, however, there is nothing to be done but take off half our load, and drive the rest—200 lbs.—in to the nearest land, which ought to be possible enough. It is only about four miles to a little island which lies off the mouth of the glacier on the coast of Kronprins Christians Land, but it takes us two men and our seven dogs eight hours' hard work to wade through the semi-liquid mass, which once was snow, but is now but a sorry mixture of slush and water.

The whole of the next day—the 3rd of June—is spent in bringing the rest of our load to land. Iversen attends to this, while the worst invalids, Viskén and I, stay at home and keep each other company.

It is impossible to hide it any longer, I am ill. The old theory of the bruises is no longer sufficient to explain it, but in vain I puzzle my brain to find out what can be the

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matter. Continual weariness and exhaustion, with stiffness and aching in all my muscles, red swollen joints, and great dark blue spots on the skin, are the most unpleasant symptoms. Suddenly the idea occurs to me—can it be scurvy? What does it say in the medical dictionary? I haven't one with me, and all I can remember is that the gums are dark and swollen, and the teeth loose. I take the lid off a tea tin, and polish it up till it makes a first-rate mirror—good enough, at any rate, for the purpose, in spite of the many dents. Out into the light, where one can see properly. H'm—gums don't look very nice, they are quite dark, almost blue, and swollen. Tender they have been for a long time, as I have reason to know, for the hard biscuits are sure to find out the soft spots. Teeth—no, thank goodness, they sit tight enough as yet—and I comfort myself with the thought that as long as they are not loose there is no fear of scurvy. And how should I have got it? I have been through all this many times before and never felt the worse for it.

Well, it doesn't matter very much after all what it is that is wrong, for it is not much that can be done in the way of treatment or medicine here. Still, one would like to know what it really is—and I become even more anxious to find out when, in the evening, coming out of the tent, I suddenly feel the earth swaying under me. I sit down on the sledge till it passes off, but as soon as I get up again to give Iversen a hand it is just as bad, and I should have fallen if he had not flung an arm round me. Things are beginning to look serious, and we are both thoughtful as we begin the night's work, for there is one thing more which I remember from the medical guide: "Unless proper treatment is commenced on the first outbreak, the disease will develop, the later stages being marked by fever and fainting fits, when death soon ensues." The words stand out with ghastly clearness in my mind, as Iversen pushes along in

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silence behind the sledge, for I am obliged to ride for the first hour, after which the stiff muscles begin to feel easier, and I can lend a hand with the work.

When we said good-bye to the inland ice we were so certain that we would never again approach it of our own free will, nevertheless, on the night of the 4th of June we find ourselves on something resembling, if not the true, heavy inland ice, at least the outer slopes of the inland ice farther to the south.

It is a long, narrow strip of ice, stretching out into the sea, and the surface looks so good that we cannot resist the temptation.

First, however, there is a narrow water lane to be crossed. It is covered with a thin layer of young ice, and as it is long since we have had any dealings with thin ice, it takes us some time to find a place which looks safe enough to bear the sledge. Once over on the tongue of ice, and fairly started on our way up, we are ready to shout for joy at the splendid going, which is far beyond anything we had ever expected. But the inland ice is treacherous—we ought to have learnt that by now, and left it alone. But once more we have to learn the same lesson, and this time we come near to paying dearly for our experience, for suddenly we feel the ground slip away from under our feet, and next moment the sledge, with Gøjs, Iversen and myself, is hanging down over a crack. Fortunately we have a good hold of the sledge, but I cannot get up without help, weakened as I am, being also too far down. Iversen is more active, and soon gets up again, and while he is getting ready to help me, I have time to look around. The crack is not deep, not more than fifty feet, and broad and level at the bottom, but it looks nasty all the same, being wider than the sledge, which is only saved by our having driven across it at an angle. The sledge shakes and trembles as Iversen clambers out, but at last he is up, and soon we are both

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standing breathless on the solid ice. It takes us a full hour to unload the sledge and haul it up, and all the time Gøjs hangs there in his harness, quite still, and evidently glad of the rest. It is the first time we have gone down a crack with the sledge; fortunately for us that it did not happen in that bottomless crevasse up there on the inland ice—this one was bad enough.

We start off at first towards N.N.E. in order to reach the sea ice as soon as possible, for this now seems to us as much to be desired as was the inland ice a couple of days ago, and even the soft snow seems preferable to the maze of cracks in which we are now situated. But the inland ice is not so easy to get away from, and after a whole night's toilsome sledging by way of punishment for our imprudence, we decide to stick to it after all, for having reached a piece of good ground at the cost of much hard work, we agree that it would be a pity to leave it now.

We are still, however, sledging along the edges of cracks all the time, following the narrower ones until we find a bridge, and keeping on the near side of the broader ones until we meet with a watercourse down which we can take our sledge, driving along the bottom until an opportunity presents itself of getting up again on the other side.

We drive along hog-back walls of ice, no wider than the sledge itself, with a fall of thirty to forty feet on either side, along narrow ledges jutting out from the sides of the broader cracks, often letting the sledge fall ten feet or more to the bottom, getting down after it ourselves as best we can. Once there—it is fairly easy going along the level sea ice, but we have to get out again sooner or later, and climbing up is considerably worse than getting down.

As long as the weather is clear enough for us to see our way, we get along somehow, though making but little forward progress, for the cracks are rarely more than a hundred feet apart, being indeed for the most part only

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separated by a narrow wall of ice; but when the fog comes down, followed shortly after by snow, it is almost impossible to get along. The sun is hidden behind the heavy clouds, and when we no longer have its light and shadow on the unbroken whiteness around, all the irregularities of the surface disappear, and we seem to be travelling over a perfectly level surface—a treacherous illusion. One lifts a foot to take a forward pace and steps, as likely as not, next moment upon air. If one is lucky, this only means stepping a foot or so farther down than one had expected—which, however, is anything but pleasant for aching legs—or stumbling over a slope of snow, while an unlucky step may send one down in a moment to the bottom of a crack.

We try letting the dogs go on ahead as usual, keeping ourselves to the rear of the sledge, where we are safe from the danger of falling, but after one or two close shaves, where we narrowly escape driving down over the sheer wall of a crack, I find it best to go on ahead myself and lead the way. I stumble on, almost as it were blindfold, seeking here and there. On all sides there are cracks down which we dare not go, unable as we are to see how deep or steep they are. At last, rendered ingenious by necessity, I take the mast from the sledge and tie my whip-lash to one end. Now we can get along better. I push the pole in front of me; it leaves a little furrow in the snow, which I can see, and the end of the pole tells also whenever there is a hole or a billow of snow six feet ahead. If the furrow stops, and the end of the pole goes downwards, then I know we are on the brink of a crack. By flinging the butt of the whip out angler-fashion, I can now see whether the side of the crack is sloping or steep, and if there is more than twenty feet to bottom. If the sides are sloping we go on and trust to luck, knowing that there cannot be very far to fall, but if the whip hangs plumb, we back away as quickly as possible and try somewhere else.

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I am enormously proud of my invention, and the very novelty of the thing makes it quite interesting, so much so that we keep on in spite of the weather, which otherwise would have forced us to camp long before. At last, however, we are stopped by a deep crack, the sides of which are perfectly sheer, with no sort of crossing to be found.

Next night, however, the 6th of June, the weather is once more clear, and after passing the crack which had stopped us the day before, we find, to our delight, level ice, good snow, and no cracks apparent. What more can we wish for? The hearty curses which we had lavished upon everything that bore the name of inland ice, or the faintest resemblance thereto, are silenced now, and soon we agree that this is ever so much better sledging after all than on the sea ice. Heaven knows how long it will be before we learn that the inland ice is not to be trifled with! But we do not think of this, we are only too pleased with the good going and the level ice over which we can see far out ahead, only too delighted to be able for once to dispense with our snowshoes and ease our tender ankles. Here there is no need for me to exert my aching muscles; I can drag my feet over the smooth surface without lifting them—and a mile and a half an hour is a splendid tonic in cases of depression when out sledging.

So delighted are we to be on good ice at last, that we keep on sledging long after we ought to have halted, anxious as we are to make up, as far as possible, for lost time. But at this time of year it is the sun, and not we, that decides how long we are to sledge. The heat has now melted the crust of snow, and just as we are getting along finely, never dreaming of danger, down goes the sledge, and Iversen with it, deep into the slushy snow. He sinks in up to his arms, and there is a lot of water on the ice. Poor fellow, he looks very uncomfortable when he is hauled up, dripping wet, but

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on the homeward journey one makes light of little accidents, and we can camp now, and creep into our sleeping bags—a splendid way of drying wet clothes.

Luck is with us now, and the good ice holds, all along the edge of Kronprins Christians Land. We drive over inland ice and sea ice, taking each as it comes, both giving first-rate going. It is often difficult to determine whether we are on the inland ice or not, so slight is the difference in the slope, and it is only on the boundary line between the two that we are obliged to be careful, for there are always open water-lanes. These are, as a rule, about two sledge-lengths across, so we are a little anxious about driving over the frail bridge formed of crushed-up last night's ice and heavier blocks. But fortune favours us, and one good thing there is about these water lanes, that the water, strangely enough, is almost fresh, the only indication of saltness being that we grow thirsty again some time after drinking.

We press steadily on, coming nearer all the time to some high nunataks or cliffs, which we have had in sight all the way from Prinsesse Dagmar's Peninsula. It is Nakkehoved, a name which calls up memories of a spot where Nature has dealt more kindly with the land than with this range of barren cliffs, the tops of which tower far above the surrounding sea of ice.¹ Yet even these are welcome, despite their nakedness, as offering some variety, and we hope to find the ice free from snow close in to land—so exacting have we become in these last days of easy going.

We sledge along close in to the coast, always on the look-out for caches. The ice is still good, and all is going as well as we could desire—except as far as I myself am concerned. My strength is failing rapidly now, and I can

¹ Nakkehoved is the name of a fishing village on the northern coast of the island of Zealand, not far from Elsinore. Nakkehoved Light is marked on the charts of the Kattegat.

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no longer keep up with the sledge, being unable to walk so fast even when holding on to the uprights. There is nothing to be done but crawl up and ride as a passenger, cursing the fate that forces me to burden the poor dogs with this considerable extra weight. It does not matter so much as long as the ice is good, but the sickness is growing worse every day. How long shall I be able to keep going? Can one expect to get well again under such conditions, or will it simply mean giving up and drifting as fate may lead? Dismal thoughts force themselves uninvited in upon my mind, each time I hear Iversen's voice; for am I not wasting precious time for him, all to no purpose? and if I die, will he be able to make his way through alone? How is he to manage the sledge, or find his way, without help?

The picture looks black and hopeless indeed, and among the many hardships and obstacles which build the barriers between us and our goal, a whole summer of starvation is but the least of many ills.

Suddenly I am roused from my cheerless meditation—the sledge crashes against a block of ice, sending a shock through all my limbs. “Girly, you scoundrel, can’t you mind where you are going? Gee!”—and soon anxieties are forgotten in the only occupation now left me, that of driving and steering the dogs. That is all I am fit for now—and even that can be fatiguing enough, when my head is racked with pain.

But we make good progress, the dogs are much more lively now than they have been for a long time, and, strange as it may seem, it almost looks as though a ration of one pound of pemmican to begin with, and three quarters of a pound the last few days, were far more nourishing than two or three pounds of fresh meat. The dogs grew thin and tired on their meat diet, and not until this was finished, and they had lived for ten days or so on pemmican, did they brighten up, growing stronger and fitter. Then we reduced their

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rations, but still their condition improves, they are looking better every day, their tails—unfailing indicators of canine temper—lift now once more, and even Visken, whose rations are ridiculously small, is picking up splendidly, though he cannot yet haul with the team.

Unfortunately, however, our dog pemmican is giving out. When this is finished we must use our own, if we do not find game. We keep a sharp look-out for bear, expecting to sight one every moment now, as we have passed the tracks of a she-bear with cubs, the prints not more than ten days old at the outside. But we pass Nakkehoved without seeing any living thing save a number of gulls who have built their nests up on an almost perpendicular wall of rock. They circle round us, shrieking, and evidently bent on finding out what we are. Two or three of them perch on a high block of ice and sit there staring at us, grave as judges, doubtless making rude remarks about the slowness of our pace. High up on the cliff we can see a number of little white dots—the hens, sitting on their eggs; and their sharp, restless cries seem to indicate that they also are busily engaged in discussing the remarkable thing which is crawling so slowly past. Soon, however, they may have something else to think about, for Iversen is on the war-path, bent on making widows of some of those good ladies up there. But luck is with them here—it is so long since we have used our guns that these have rusted together, and we are reluctantly compelled to make a virtue of necessity and relinquish our murderous designs.

Soon Nakkehoved is left behind, and we are sledging along the low wall of the glacier. The ice is good, and we make fine progress, passing point after point, and veering each time farther to the south, until we halt, on the morning of the 10th of June, apparently at no great distance from the site of the Danmark Expedition's depot. At last we have reached the spot, but it is hopeless to begin looking

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for the depot now, for it is foggy and stormy, besides which to-day is a holiday, being the hundredth day since we left the *Alabama*. We have a great banquet, consisting of pea-soup, thick and plenty of it, the last of the apples, and a whole biscuit more than the usual ration. Outside the tent, too, the day is celebrated in style; we both agree that the dogs have deserved some little recognition of their hard work and fairly good behaviour, wherefore they receive as reward something of that which we best can spare—half a cake of chocolate apiece. This is not exactly usual as dog-feed, and scarcely calculated to do them any great good, but it all helps to fill up, and the dogs are delighted.

Poor brutes; for 100 days they have been hauling at the sledges, covering 680 miles, of which 160 in double relays, making a total of something like 1000 miles, all the time exposed to cold, hunger and hard treatment. They have eaten their comrades, who had worked themselves to death, and if we do not find game within the next few days, others will follow their example. Whether any of them will live through the summer is very doubtful, but if they do, and reach the *Alabama* with us, then their future is assured, they shall never again be set to haul at a sledge. Each of us will look after our favourite dogs until they die of old age. And as we sit talking about it, we cannot help laughing at the thought of old Ugly, the glutton, face to face with a well-stocked butcher's shop. But, alas, doubt is for ever lurking in our minds, and every time fancy conjures up the picture of our return comes the eternal scoffing whisper, "Do you *still* think that you can reach the ship in time?"

We think so still; hope so, at any rate, but things are looking blacker now. We have still 600 miles to cover before we reach the ship. I am ill and unable to walk, our dog-feed is used up; still, all may yet be well. We are always more sanguine when we lie comfortably in our sleeping bags, where I, moreover, am free from pain.

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After a few hours the weather clears a little, and Iversen starts out to look for the depot. He soon returns, and reports, to our mutual astonishment, that the contents of the depot consist of two pounds of pemmican, one pound of peas and ten pounds of forcemeat with cabbage. This is no sort of provision for three men, and we come to the conclusion that Mylius Erichsen must have been here and taken what he wanted; the only strange thing about it is that he should have left anything at all, as they were sorely in want of food, and could not tell how soon the young ice would break up close in to land and stop their progress. Some light may be thrown on the mystery when we reach the next depot in Amdrups Land, but it is a good thing that we are fairly well provisioned ourselves, and are not forced to rely upon these depots, for the food left here would not be nearly enough to carry us to the next depot, apart from the fact that this one contains neither fuel nor dog-feed.

We must admit that it is something of a disappointment not to find the well-filled case of provisions, with the many good things which we had expected to find here; but the disappointment is soon forgotten, for Iversen has brought back more than bare news of the depot. After we have sat for a while talking over matters, he pulls forth from his anorak a gull, which he exhibits with pardonable pride, as it is the first bird that has fallen to our guns, and we are badly in need of some fresh meat. And in spite of the masses of ice everywhere to be seen, in spite of the inland ice itself, which stretches right down to the coast, it is still evident that we must be nearing a milder zone, for he has also seen a big flock of wild geese. I doubt whether Noah in his Ark could have been more delighted over the return of the dove than are we in this desert of ice at the news that there are wild geese to be found, for it promises well for our bag, when once we have passed this eternal wall of ice and are again sledging along the land. It does not take much to

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cheer us up, we have not the slightest doubt now but that we shall succeed in getting both bear and seal meat for the dogs, and keep them strong and in good condition. And if it is scurvy I am suffering from, I shall pick up again all right as soon as we get plenty of meat. Nothing seems impossible to us now; it is long since we have been so hopeful—and all for the sake of a single gull! One has not much in the way of pleasant surprises up here, but the few that come in one's way are all the more appreciated.

My enthusiasm is considerably damped, however, before we get going once more. Wishing to spare the dogs as much as possible, I walk on ahead, leaving Iversen to strike the tent. With a stick in either hand I limp along on my aching feet, until giddiness overcomes me, and I am obliged to lie down in the snow to recover myself. It is a slow business, but at the end of half-an-hour Iversen overtakes me, and I get up on the sledge. This is easier, but it is humiliating to have to sit there and scold the dogs when I know that it is my own weight which is hindering their progress.

Soon we reach the little rocky island where the depot is situated, but beyond the things Iversen found yesterday, nothing is to be seen save some fragments of rope, a few empty tins, and general indications of a camp having existed on the spot. There is nothing to stay for here, and we drive on again between a lot of little islands or banks of glacial deposit, which lie out beyond the inland ice. Suddenly Iversen makes a snatch at the sledge, causing the dogs to halt in astonishment, and whispers eagerly, "Look, look—what's that?" He points to something which looks like a lot of round stones, and I can scarcely believe my eyes; it is a big flock of geese, sitting there sound asleep without having heard us. In a very few seconds Iversen is on his way towards them, I of course remaining where I am on the sledge, fairly trembling with excitement. He takes aim—I am almost dancing with impatience—fires, and the whole

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flock rises. Stop a minute—isn't there one on the ground ? I snatch up the glass—not one, but two are left upon the field, and after following the shrieking flock for a while, Iversen returns beaming with joy, a big fat goose in either hand. We are delighted with our bag and drive off southwards in the best of spirits, Iversen even stopping every now and then to feel the splendid fat bodies of the birds, and we do nothing but talk of what a feast we are to have when they are cooked, with some of the cabbage found at the last depot.

The ice is level and almost free from snow. This means good going. The little islands with their geese are soon left far behind, and we are driving past the blank monotonous glacier front. It is not pretty to look at, but we do not care for that as long as the ice is good. The dogs are doing their best ; Iversen marches at the rear of the sledge, singing at the top of his voice, and even I feel a little better. There is, however, no longer any doubt ; it is scurvy, for I can now feel my teeth loose in my jaw.

We keep a sharp look-out for bear, but have not much hope of finding any, for there are no tracks, new or old, to be seen. We had looked forward so confidently to finding game about here, for the men of the Danmark Expedition found many bears in this locality. There are none, however, this year, and Visken has to die—there is no sense in keeping him alive any longer. He is very thin, but the little flesh there is on his bones has to make two rations, and the dogs are hungry, sulky and bad-tempered.

On the morning of the 16th of June we reach the Amdrups Land depot, which as far as we can see has not been touched. It consists of three pounds of pemmican, one pound of peas, two pounds of forcemeat and cabbage, besides 100 pounds of dog-feed. There is also a message from Kock stating that bear and walrus meat have been deposited in a cache—nothing more. Mylius Erichsen has evidently not been

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here, and we are obliged to give up all hope of finding his and Høeg Hagen's effects, unless they should have gone up the glacier here to the north of us, and then on by sledge down to the depot at Mallemuk Fjæld.

We are delighted at finding such a quantity of dog-feed, and the dogs howl with joy on seeing Iversen come out with a great chunk to each, but they appear to have become dainty all of a sudden, they sniff at the food and do not seem exactly inclined to begin. We are also disappointed, for finding such a quantity of food for the dogs, we imagined it must be something of the same sort as our own, and were looking forward to being able to give the dogs a good square meal for once, taking care, however, that they did not over-eat themselves, and keep us lying idle next day. Our anxiety in this respect, however, proves unfounded, for as soon as they have taken the edge off their appetite, they turn up their noses at the food and begin wandering about in search of something better. Ugly soon smells out Kock's depot, and although the meat is long since bad, he seems to find it infinitely better than the fresh patent food, made of whale's flesh and oil. Here, however, we interfere, afraid lest the bad meat should make him ill, and to his great disgust he and the other dogs are placed in durance vile, for fear of accidents. By way of consolation, we give them a piece more of the patent food, but they are not to be bought over in this way, and scarcely deign to eat it. Then Iversen goes off with his gun, returning shortly after with a goose. The land is not exactly what one could call flowing with milk and honey, but goose is good enough for us, especially if we could manage to get a seal or a bear for the dogs.

The temperature is still below zero, but we are very much afraid it will not stay there long, and on the evening of the 16th, as we are getting ready to start off again, it is no less than 2° above. There is water on the ice, and the dogs do not like it at all, they lift their paws high up in

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the air, turning round continually as though to ask if we haven't made a mistake. It is not our fault, but the dogs don't think of that, and it takes something more than kind words to urge them forward to-day, for the water is horribly cold, and splashes up about them till the poor beasts are wet to the skin. It is not so bad as long as we keep on the move, but when we halt it is most uncomfortable, there is not a dry spot to be found anywhere, and they have to keep standing, unless, like Ugly and Girly they happen to be intelligent and impudent enough to climb up beside me on the sledge. They are welcome enough, all of them, but they misunderstand our kind intentions, and when Iversen picks them up and lays them on the sledge, they seem to think they must have misbehaved themselves somehow, and that we have found out a new and particularly objectionable way of punishing them. They yelp and howl, and give us no peace until they are set down in the water again. "All right," says Iversen, "stay where you are then—we don't care. It won't kill you, anyway!"

There are seal lying about on the ice, and several times in the course of the day we halt the sledge to give Iversen a chance of stalking them, but they are wary, and slide off into the water long before he can get within range. We hate seals; it is so irritating to see so much fine meat and not be able to get at it. But only the Eskimo is a match for the seal up here, and although I have often been out seal-hunting with the Eskimos, and managed to get my share of the booty, it is not so easy to teach another man the tricks of the game, when one can't get up oneself and show him how it is done. But as a matter of fact, we have no time to waste on seal just now, besides which we have plenty of dog-feed on the sledge, if only the dogs would eat it.

We leave Amdrups Land, and begin driving over Ingolfs Fjord, but as usual find snow on the ice as soon as we get away from land. It is not soft snow this time, however;

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on the contrary, it is hard as cement, and so rough that I have to be lashed fast to the sledge to keep me from falling off. This is the worst day I have had, but Iversen is indefatigable in his care and kindness, and drives as carefully as he possibly can.

It is hard on him, too, he has to do all the work by himself—driving the dogs, and helping them with the sledge, but in spite of all he can always find time to tuck a sack more comfortably under my back when shaking has displaced it, or stuff an anorak in under me to ease my aching head. I am effectively prevented from protesting by high fever, and even manage to make things worse for Iversen by starting up now and then in delirium, shouting out that we are driving into a crack. I have no power to resist, but simply drift and drift, caring but little if I live or die, only now and then, at sound of Iversen's cheery voice, I start, and the thought of what is to become of him if I go haunts me even in my delirium.

Fortunately it gets better as we get farther away from land, the billows of snow are smaller, the fever subsides, and at last, utterly exhausted, I fall asleep on the sledge.

On the 19th of June we reach Eskimo Næsset on the other side of the strait, and as the ice is very rough close in to the coast, we have to drive along the low foreshore. To-day I am feeling better, and can drive the dogs myself, but we do not get very far all the same; there are too many objects on land which attract our attention. Long ago, human beings have lived here in considerable numbers, and we find traces of them everywhere—tent rings, mounds, and bones of whale and walrus. I would give anything to be able to walk round myself and examine these remains of one of the hardiest races on earth; but it is no good. I am forced to content myself with looking on from a distance, and let Iversen go up to the camps. He finds a lot of gear left by the skilful Eskimo workers—sledge-runner shoes

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made of narwhal's tusk, arrows and spear-heads, as well as a lot of flat plates of bone hollowed out on one side and with holes bored through. The only explanation I can find as to these last, is that they must have been used as paddle-blades for the umiaks, the hollow part being intended to receive the shaft, to which the blade was lashed by means of the holes. We take away as many of these relics as we dare carry, but we are obliged to leave a great deal behind. Then we sledge off again along the coast, in order to reach Mallemuk Fjæld as soon as possible. All day we talk of how good it would be if these people who lived here once still moved among their tents down on the shore: then we would throw in our lot with them, and stay among them till the spring. But they are gone, and only the ancient relics remain—we must drive on, and trust to our own exertions and the chance of finding game. Whether the former inhabitants of the little settlement are dead or have sought other grounds is hard to say; probably the former, otherwise they would scarcely have left behind so much good gear. Hard indeed must be the life up here, year after year and generation after generation, but there must have been game enough at that time, as the many bones clearly show. However, to judge from the experience of the Danmark Expedition, as well as our own, it would seem that in most years they have not had far to go to find open water.

Soon we are forced to halt; the sun is flaming in a cloudless sky, and the snow is now soft. We drive up on to the land and choose a camping-place from which we have a good view out over the water. It is quite encouraging to see one's own element again; the little waves flash and sparkle in the sun as though beckoning kindly to us. I would give much to answer the call, and go out, strong and healthy as I was not so very long ago; for there must be game out there, seal and gulls, and perhaps even a wandering bear. Iversen is busy pitching the tent, and we talk over

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prospects of game, agreeing that this ought to be a good place for bears, though strangely enough we have seen no tracks up to now. Mechanically my eyes wander over the ice. Suddenly I start—is it mere feverish fancy, or is that a bear? Down there, not two hundred metres away, is a bear, where a minute ago was nothing but ice. “Iversen, can you see anything down there?”—it is as well to know whether I am seeing visions in broad daylight, but his answer disposes of my fears. “Bear, by ——” he exclaims, and hurries off for his gun. Bear! If only we can get it! It means salvation for the dogs and medicine for me: my eyes measure the distance between Iversen and the still unsuspecting bear. Alas, the distance is increasing, we have discovered him too late. Something must be done, for I know from experience that a man cannot overtake a bear.

How I manage to reach the dogs I do not know, but I get there, and taking out my knife, cut Ugly loose from the traces. “Off with you, Ugly, off and stop the bear—you can do it, if you are quick!” And off goes Ugly after the bear, but suddenly, for some reason or other, he changes his mind, and turns off toward Iversen. The distance is increasing every minute, and as a last resource I give a shout, and fling myself down in the snow, hoping to attract the bear’s attention and make him think it is a seal. Sure enough the big beast stops, looks about him in astonishment, catches sight of me, stands for a moment looking up, and then begins running out to the ice. I had managed to stop him, however, and before he could get under way again Iversen had sunk on one knee, taken a careful aim, and fired. The shot told, but wounded him only in the hind-quarters, and soon the bear is out by the open water, while I lie with my face buried in the snow, beside myself with disappointment. Iversen is still in pursuit, but it is no use, the snow is so soft that it is impossible to keep up with the wounded beast, and Ugly will not tackle a bear alone.

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As a rule, everything is cosy and cheerful in the tent, but to-day we both sit in silence, thinking how different it would have been if only we had sighted the beast two minutes earlier—it could not have escaped us.

On the night from 19–20th of June progress along the coast becomes impossible, owing to the heavy pressure ridges, so we turn off and drive right out to the edge of the open water. Here the young ice is good, the snow has melted, and the water has run off into the sea. We get along splendidly here, and our spirits rise as we see seal after seal bob up and stare curiously at us with big bright eyes. They keep on following the sledge, lifting head and shoulders out of the water to get a better view. If we whistle, they stay quite still and listen. It is a most amusing performance; their eyes are fixed upon us all the time, and the water pours in shining drops down their sleek skin. But they are cautious, too cautious to venture into close range, and to shoot them so far out in the water would be senseless murder, for we cannot reach them. But never mind—our time will come. Every dog has his day; wait till we have time for a real seal-hunt.

CHAPTER X

BEGINNING OF SUMMER

At Mallemuk Fjæld—The depot—A long halt—A reprieve—
Lose two more dogs—Cross to Hovgaards Island—A disaster—
Short of food—A welcome find—Death of Girly—Seal-hunting
—Leave Hovgaard's Island.

WE drive for some hours along the edge of the open water, seeing both eider duck and mallemuk, besides seal, and we are quite sorry to leave it, but we are obliged to close in on the land in order not to pass the depot at Mallemuk Fjæld.

There are heavy pressure ridges to be passed. The snow between them is awful, and I, who am unable to walk, get off at the worst places and sit down on a piece of ice until Iversen, after a hard struggle, has managed to get the sledge through, and comes back to help me. It is slow work, but we get through somehow, and are well rewarded for our pains, for in under the splendid heights of Mallemuk Fjæld the ice is level and smooth. Now it is first-rate going; the dogs trot along with their tails in the air; Iversen marches in the rear singing at the top of his voice, and rousing the echoes among the cliffs. It seems a perfect little paradise we are now approaching. Great flocks of gulls, startled at the sound of Iversen's voice, answer with loud shrieks as they circle round us; the swift little mallemuks come flying down straight towards us at full speed, checking their flight so suddenly at a few yards' distance that we can

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hear the whirr of their wings, while far above our heads the great heavy gloukos float majestically in the air. There are fresh tracks of bear on the ice, seals lie basking in the sun, and on land the little snow-sparrows chirrup merrily. Down the steep sides of Mallemuk Fjæld the water streams in many small cascades; it is summer here, and all the land is green.

We drive long over the smooth ice the first day, without, however, reaching the depot, and when we start off next morning a thick fog shuts out the view. How different from the brightness of yesterday—then we could look around far and wide on all sides; we could see the glaciers on Hovgaards Island, and far into Djimphna Fiord; the Mallemuk Fjæld lay bathed in light, and the grotesque forms of the icebergs stood out sharp and clear. To-day all is dull and grey; the icebergs are but vague, whitish patches, showing faintly against the fog; the Mallemuk Fjæld is hidden from view; we can see nothing but a little stretch of dark and desolate beach, which fades away into the fog a few yards ahead. There is water everywhere on land, and the deep snow makes heavy going; there are broad cracks in the ice; the dogs are wet through and dejected—it is a dismal day all round. We follow the coast close in by the tidal cracks, and whenever we see anything remotely resembling a depot, Iversen goes in to explore. We find nothing, however, to show that men have ever been here; nor are we more fortunate next day, when the fog has given place to low, dark clouds from which great heavy drops of water fall. The only thing we get out of the two days' work is a hare, which I espied high up among the rocks; it is not much, but it is better than nothing, for I am badly in need of fresh meat. The slight improvement which I fancied I could notice in my condition after the geese and gulls which Iversen had shot has disappeared again, and we are glad to get the hare, which means meat enough for four days—with economy. The



CAPE RIGSDAGEN



NAKKEHOVED

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THE MALLEMUK FJELD



THE MALLEMUK FJELD FROM ANOTHER SIDE

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depot, however, is nowhere to be found, and as we do not want to lose time we agree to give it up, and try to get across to Hovgaards Island as soon as possible.

It is easier said than done, for the mild weather of the last two days has melted a great deal of snow, and there is water on the ice in all directions, so that we are obliged to drive through broad lakes. It grows worse and worse the farther we get from land, and two miles out we are obliged to give it up, further progress being checked by a big lake, with scattered ice-blocks lying like islands here and there. It is too deep to wade through, and we can find no way round, so, after talking matters over, we agree to wait here at Mallemuk Fjæld until the snow is melted, and the water drained off through holes in the ice. This gives me a chance of picking up a little, for a rest will certainly do me good. We must be able to shoot some gulls, at any rate, and ought to get a seal or two, while the bears cannot be far away.

We have provisions for twenty days, counting with the small rations we have been having of late, but game is absolutely necessary if we are to remain here—partly for ourselves, but most of all for the dogs, who are very poorly, and sorely in need of food, that is, something which they will eat. They have had plenty of food ever since we reached the depot at Amdrups Land, but it is not much good when they will not eat it. They eat enough to keep them from actual starvation, but no more, and are now frightfully thin and pulled down. We have only Girly, Bruin, Ugly, Pan and Gøjs left now, and Gøjs is so exhausted that we expect her to die any minute. She gets the bones of the hares, geese and gulls after we have picked and scraped them clean—that is all we can give her in the way of extra food, and she is glad to get it, but it doesn't go far, I'm afraid, and will scarcely suffice to save her.

It is delightful to be able to shift the responsibility for

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delay from my own shoulders on to the lateness of the season, for this it is which hinders progress now. My own weakness makes no difference, and I am able to enjoy the longed-for rest with an easy conscience. Lying in the tent, or outside in the warm sunshine, is very different to being shaken about on a sledge, and it is luxurious to think that it may be many days before we can move. Now I begin to hope that I may get better after all—if I can only get meat—and Iversen is indefatigable in his exertions, being out all day with his gun, ten or twelve or even fourteen hours, and always returning with a gull or two.

It is not much we get in the way of game, for the gulls fly high, and it is not so easy to get within range of them as we thought. It is enough, however; one gull per day is sufficient fresh meat for me, and we have still enough of our own provisions to go on with. It is but a poor reward, however, for so many hours' stalking, and we should be glad to see a bigger bag, for this is not enough to keep us alive if for any reason we should be forced to stay here some time. However, we must hope for the best. I ought to be well again soon, and then we shall see what we can do with two guns.

At last one day Iversen strikes the depot. I am lying in the tent, never dreaming of seeing him back so soon, for it is only a couple of hours since he went off. Suddenly I hear a faint hallo, a great distance away. I sit up and listen—there it is again—and by the time I can get my head out of the tent, Iversen is running down towards me at full speed. Again he shouts—it must be something important—and now he calls out to ask if I can hear him. "Yes," I shout back, making my head swim with the effort; but next moment that is forgotten, for Iversen puts his hands trumpetwise to his mouth and roars: "I've found the depot—and heaps of good things."

I hasten to get the oil-stove going and make some tea

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to celebrate the joyful event, and soon Iversen comes up, breathless, and scarcely able to speak, but wild with delight. He had found the depot—it was hidden under a landslide, and only when he saw the skull of a bear far up on land did he suspect that the depot must be somewhere near. He poked about among the rocks and dug it out at last, stayed just long enough to see what there was inside, and then hurried back to tell the news. There is a whole case of provisions—if it is not spoiled by the damp; it means full rations for two men for about fifteen days—besides dog-feed, and petroleum, and two soldered tin cases, as to the contents of which we make the wildest conjectures. There is a carbine, which is no use, and a case containing a whole lot of odds and ends, and finally a couple of messages to Mylius Erichsen—one from Capt. Kock and one from Thostrup, the mate, who had laid down the depot. Thostrup's letter contains information as to the contents of the depots farther to the south, and we are now rich beyond belief, for there is food in plenty every thirty or fifty miles, and at one place, south of Lambert's Land, there should be five whole cases of provisions, but probably without pemmican. This is untold wealth; our immediate future is assured, even if the game should fail us entirely, and we are almost beside ourselves with joy.

Iversen soon gets the dogs hitched up to the sledge, and helps me down to the beach. To lie still now would be impossible—I must go and have a look at our new treasures. We dash along over the bare ice, crossing broad cracks, and turn in towards land, where the cases are standing in a row. There is a little hole in the provision tin, and Iversen assures me that it smells all right—there can't be much the matter. But he cannot wait until we get back to make sure, it is all too exciting, and we cut open the case with a knife. It doesn't look very appetising. The biscuits are mouldy, the chocolate green, most of the sugar has melted away, and

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some of the tins are rusted through. On the whole, however, it is not so bad, and although it doesn't look very tempting, most of it is eatable—in our present condition.

It was not originally intended for us, of course, but the men who should have had it never reaped the benefit of their comrades' toil and care, and as it would be spoiled in any case in a very short time, we take it all along with us and open the cases as soon as we get back to camp. Clean clothes and tobacco, and in among the clothes little packets of cigarettes and cigars and a whole tin of preserved gooseberries—a witness to the kindly feeling which existed between those on board and their comrades on the trail.

It would have gladdened the hearts of Mylius Erichsen and his two companions if they had reached here, to see the kindly care with which their comrades had thought of them; but even though all the things would have been in far better condition than than now, their joy could not have been greater than ours, and we think gratefully of the men who sent these little gifts, and of those who braved cold and hardship to get them here. True, we who now reap the benefit of their kindness and their toil are strangers to them, but if they could see how thankful we are for it all, they would surely be satisfied with the fruits of their kindly act.

Inside the tent Iversen has stuck up a lot of tins in a long row; lobscouse and black puddings, forcemeat with cabbage, and many other dainty dishes; and it is so long since we have been able to choose between such a variety of good things that it is quite difficult to decide what to take first. We are too hungry, however, to waste much time in thinking over it. Iversen decides for lobscouse—half a tin—and as we imagine that oatmeal must be good for scurvy, I feast on porridge. The oatmeal is mouldy, but never mind, a little mildew can't hurt very much, and we both agree that we have never had a finer feast. We eat it slowly, a little at a time, tasting every spoonful, and when coffee is

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served after the banquet, we have nothing more to wish for.

Now we can look forward confidently to the future, and the days pass without event, the only variety being that afforded by the weather, which is fine now and then, but more often foggy and cold. And in sunshine or fog, or chilly wind, off goes Iversen each day with his gun in search of meat for his sick comrade, while I lie by myself in the tent, with nothing to do save keep a look-out, and have a cup of tea ready for him when he returns, tired and chilled, but with unimpaired good-humour, from his lonely hunting.

On the 29th of June we make an attempt at moving on, but are obliged to give it up, there being still too much water and snow about, and Iversen, who has gone on ahead with half our gear, is up to his waist in slush. We should have liked to get away, on account of the scarcity of game, but must restrain our impatience and wait a few days more. We shift our camp, however, over to the north of Mallemuk Fjæld, where we are nearer open water, and hope to find more game.

One reads so often in books of the joy of a condemned man suddenly reprieved, and I have often tried to imagine what it was really like, but all my attempts have been far short of the mark; not until now have I ever realised what it means. Now I think I understand. For I have been so sure, all this while, that I was to die—and how could I think otherwise? I have been growing steadily weaker, felt my strength ebbing day by day; it is three weeks now since I last stood on my feet without aid, and all the time my limbs have been growing blacker and more swollen. But to-day, when Iversen has struck the tent, and I am sitting on my sleeping bag, waiting, as usual, for him to come and help me down to the beach, the thought occurs to me to see if I can walk after all. I get on to my feet with the aid of a couple of sticks; it is a painful process,

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and I am giddy, but this passes over, and after standing a few moments I take a step forward. Nothing happens—I try another, and trembling with delight fling away one stick, stand hesitating a little, then forward again—drop the other stick—still all goes well. “Iversen, look—I can walk!” And walk I do, right down to the beach, where Iversen is standing, as delighted, apparently, as I myself. I can even sit down without help, and feel inclined to do all sorts of ridiculous things, such as standing on my head and shouting for joy, and what not. All night I lie awake, whispering to myself: “I can walk, I can walk—not going to die this time—get well again soon, and do my share.”

A sleepless night is not generally accounted anything to be thankful for, but to-night I am so overjoyed at being able to think of the future once more—at seeing any future at all—that I never notice the hours. Once more I can feel the joy of living, once more make plans, and I fall to whispering again to myself: “I can walk—I can walk—ha-ha!”

Not until morning comes, and we are getting ready to start, do I begin to doubt—suppose it should not last! But as soon as we are once on the ice I know that I am better; the pain, too, is much less than it was the evening before. Never has the sunshine seemed so beautiful—even the dark frowning wall of the Mallemuk Fjæld looks bright and smiling now. And how we are going! The snow on the ice has melted, leaving broad sheets of water, fairly deep, but it is all the same to us; we keep straight ahead, driving through thick and thin. Time and again I halt the dogs to make sure that I am not dreaming—that I really can walk. Both Iversen and I are more cheerful than we have been for a long time, we laugh and sing—this is something like a day! Last time we drove past Mallemuk Fjæld there were a lot of little streams trickling down its sides, but in the ten days we have been lying idle the summer

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has advanced with giant strides, and now we are astonished to hear a mighty rushing sound, increasing as we near it to a deafening roar. It is a great waterfall which is pouring over the edge of the cliff with such a thunder that we are obliged to shout at the top of our voices to make ourselves heard. The water flows out over the ice in great sheets, in many places it has worn holes; it would not be wise to stay much longer north of Mallemuk Fjæld, for the ice will soon be gone altogether. Well, the temptation is not very great, for although nearer the open water, which lies some two miles away, there is but little more game than farther up the fiord, and after a stay of but two days we turn back once more to have another try at crossing to Hovgaards Island.

On the 5th of June we make the attempt, lashing snow-runners and plates of tin under the bottom boards to keep the sledge from sinking into the snow. In spite of these precautions, however, we are obliged to give it up; the going is as bad as ever. There is a foot or more of water under the snow on the level ice, and among the pressure ridges and old floes there are holes where the water is two or three feet deep, if we can touch bottom at all. Progress is impossible—it is useless to try to get through this sea of slush where neither we nor the dogs can move, let alone work, and after toiling all night we turn back and make for land once more, to dry our clothes and provisions. We have not yet given up all hope of getting on, however; we are going to make one more try, and as the snow might by now be melted from the winter ice, I let Iversen drive round outside the pressure ridges with an empty sledge, out towards the edge of the open water, and from there over towards Hovgaards Island. This succeeds beyond our utmost expectations; he returns after some hours with good news, having reached nearly all the way across to Hovgaards Island, and finding only water on the ice, and no snow at all.

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We have stayed here eighteen days at Mallemuk Fjæld, but the stay has done us good. I am well again now, more or less, at any rate, and can take a hand at the work; the snow has melted from the winter ice, and we hope to be able to get a good way to the southward before it finally breaks up and drifts out to sea. Unfortunately we have lost two of our dogs during the stay; Gøjs could do no more and had to be shot, and Pan, our *enfant terrible* from the inland ice, found a watery grave. He never did like water, and was therefore not much use during the last part of the journey, but was otherwise fairly fit. Then Iversen took him along on the last trip over towards Hovgaards Island, and knowing Pan's aversion to being driven through water, he unhitched him when they got to the tidal crack, thinking to come back and carry him across when the sledge and the rest of the team had reached dry land.

Pan, however, seemed to consider this an insult, and as soon as Iversen's back was turned he resolved to get across on his own account. He was never very bright, and managed in this instance to find the deepest and broadest part to make the crossing; but the water was cold, and when Iversen came back a few minutes later to fetch him, there stood Pan, with his head above water, dead as a stone. I, of course, knew nothing about it until Iversen came back bearing the body, and stating that Pan had died of apoplexy! It was a sad death, but better, no doubt, than will fall to the lot of the remaining three, for if we do not soon find game, and plenty of it, we shall have to kill them ourselves for food, for we are beginning to feel the pinch of hunger, and are obliged to reduce our rations every day. Thus our recollections of the stay at Mallemuk Fjæld are not all of the brightest, including as they do two deaths among the dogs and hunger among ourselves, with considerable disappointment in the matter of game; nevertheless, it has not been such a bad time after all, and it is not without something

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like regret that we say good-bye on the afternoon of the 8th of July to our old camping-place and the familiar surroundings. But the sledge is loaded up, the dogs are waiting, good-bye, old Mallemuk Fjæld—we shall not forget you ! For here it was we found the depot—and I got my reprieve !

For the last time we drive past the steep cliff with its roaring waterfall and its many gulls—which we did not manage to shoot. And it is high time we made a move, for the ice, which on our arrival was one solid field, is now striped and dotted with broad lanes and large holes, which prove difficult to get over. Soon there will be open water right up to the cliff, but this does not trouble us. We get past in safety, and soon reach the level, snowless ice farther out to sea.

We are hurrying southward now at full speed, and although we would willingly spare our dogs as far as possible, we are obliged to drive them through great sheets of water up to their bellies. But the three dogs which we now have left are the best of the outfit, and although they are hungry and thin, and hate the water, they pull with a will, and take all obstacles without a murmur. Our sleeping bags, together with everything which the wet could spoil, are packed high on top of empty tins and cases, and our load, though not heavy, is as high as a house, and not a little shaky. But there are two of us now to the work, and with our faces turned homewards we make light of difficulties.

There are many cracks in the ice, broad open lanes, where the little waves dance and glitter in the sun, and the seals stick up their inquiring heads ; but we manage to get across by driving the sledge out on to small floating sheets of ice, which then do duty as a ferry. We push them out into the water as far as possible, and then let the wind take our raft where it will, until we near a jutting point on the opposite side, often more than fifty feet away. As soon as

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the ice-ferry touches the farther shore, we urge on the dogs, and with one of us hauling at the bow of the sledge and the other pushing at the rear, and with a hearty heave from dogs and men, we get over on to solid ice once more. Here, too, the ice will soon be broken up, and the water open out to sea, for the lanes are now three times as wide as when Iversen was here twenty-four hours ago.

There is a good deal of fog about, which delays our progress considerably, for we dare not drive at hazard among all these cracks. But it is almost beyond my strength to work for a whole night as yet, and I am not sorry to take advantage of the weather and enjoy a longer rest than we should feel justified in taking if it were fine and clear. The dogs, too, are all the better for a shorter day and a longer rest, for the sharp ice troubles them a good deal, and their paws are liable to get badly cut. It is especially hard on Girly, for there is a lot of water to get through, and she, being the leader, is obliged to break the thin crust of ice which the frost has formed on the surface during the night. This is fatiguing work at the best of times, and Girly is not well just now; she has been poorly for some days. There is something the matter with her inside, and it is evidently painful, for she sleeps badly, turning restlessly, and whining softly. As soon as she is in harness and hitched up she is as quick and watchful and willing as ever, but as soon as we stop she begins to whimper, and comes up to us to be petted. My poor little leader, it is food she wants. If only we could give her all she needs! Heaven knows we should not grudge it if we but had it—but we are all in the same case for that matter, and little Girly must put up with it as the rest of us have to do. When the fog gets too thick for further progress we camp, pleased both at the thought of the distance covered and of the rest in store, for we are very comfortable out here, and have as much chance of getting bear or seal as closer in to land.

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We have passed the Djimphna Fjord, and are now sledging along the inhospitable eastern coast of Hovgaards Island, which, by the way, is nothing but one big glacier, save for a little point of land which here and there pierces the thick ice. Even these, however, are inaccessible for us, as the enormous amount of water which is continually pouring down from the glacier has melted a broad channel all along the coast. From this run a number of smaller channels, for the most part at right-angles to our course, and these lanes, from ten to fifty feet across, give us a lot of trouble, forcing us to make wide detours. If we can find a piece of ice large enough for a raft, we test it with the ice-spear to see if it can bear the weight of the sledge. In this way we manage all right as a rule, but in spite of caution things can sometimes go wrong, and once we come very near to losing the sledge. There is a broad lane to be crossed, and we have to drive along the edge through snow and slush for a couple of hours before finding a piece of ice to serve our purpose. I am strong enough now to take a fairly good long jump, and with a line made fast round my waist I board the raft to be. It is a big sheet, twenty feet at least in diameter, with no cracks apparent, and the edge is hard and solid. It looks all right, and Iversen hauls me and my ferry in to the shore. We drive out on to the middle of the raft, and the sledge is nearly across, when suddenly the dogs take fright at the water on the other side, and stop hauling. We are pushing behind at the sledge, and now that the dogs are no longer pulling, the raft begins to edge away from the shore. We try to haul the sledge back, but the dogs won't have it; they brace their weight forward against our pulling, and the distance between the raft and the solid ice increases. Now the rear of the sledge is in the water—look out!—and with a little piece of ice as a stepping-stone we spring across on to the raft where the bow of the sledge is still resting. The whip sings

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mercilessly over the dogs' ears, we haul and heave at the sledge, shouting encouragement to our weary beasts, but the sledge will not come, it sinks deeper and deeper every minute, and on it is all—every rag and crumb and drop—that stands between us and death. To haul it up now is impossible, it has grown too heavy; there is but one thing to do—cut the lashings and save what we can from the wreck. But the sledge is almost standing on end, and things look black indeed. I hang on as well as I can to the sledge, while Iversen, being the more active, hauls in bit by bit of the load—first the rifles and ammunition, then diaries and provisions, and to our unspeakable joy we manage to get most of it back into safety. The theodolite and the camera, a spade and some odds and ends go to the bottom, but most of it is hauled up on to the raft, which is soon ferried across to the opposite side. Now we have time to look at the damage, which is pretty serious. Everything is soaking wet, and although clothes, sleeping bags, books, etc., can be dried, our provisions are in a sorry state. The few handfuls of biscuits we had left are a slimy mass of dirty dough, the dried vegetables have swollen up to three times their size, and we have to squeeze the wet out of the tea with our hands. The water is perfectly brown, and we are anything but pleased at the waste. If it had only been fresh water, then we could have boiled it, as well as the water from the vegetables; but it is salt, very salt, and we are forced to give up this method of economising. Our own salt is all melted away—that doesn't matter so much, since there is salt enough now in the rest of the provisions, but it is worse with the sugar—the last few ounces gone beyond recall. We have plenty of work to do now, drying our wet gear and repairing the damage as far as possible; the vegetables have to be dried and sewn up in a bit of canvas to keep them from being spoiled or lost, and the biscuits are put into a bag, wrung out, and hung up to dry.

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In spite of this, the latter are almost uneatable, and we regret now that we were so sparing with them, for biscuits mixed with salt water and fried in a pan do not make a very appetising dish. But we trust to the contents of the case of provisions, which according to Thostrup's message should be lying on some rocks S.E. of Hovgaards Island, and with this in view our loss is not so very serious after all.

Food we must have, however, of some sort or other, for we have been living now for a long time on less than a pound a day, and it is beginning to tell on our strength. We have nothing but pemmican left, and although under ordinary circumstances it would seem monotonous to eat the same food for months together, we think it a delightful dish. We are only sorry there is so little of it, for we dare not eat more than half-a-pound a day. As long as we had biscuits to help it out, it was not so bad, but now that we have nothing but pemmican, vegetables, and tea, the pangs of hunger are beginning to be unpleasant, and we gaze with longing eyes at the little rocky islands which are rising above the southern horizon. There is food, but it is a long way off, and the ice is getting worse every day. The cracks are broader and more numerous, but worst of all is the snow, which still lies deep between the pressure ridges and on the old floes. It is like driving over a bog. Sometimes, but not often, there is a thin crust which is strong enough to bear us, but a few steps farther on, men, dogs, and sledge sink down deep into the treacherous slush. The water is deep, and icy cold; it gets down into our kamicks, and the snow hangs fast in great cakes on our trousers and shirts, where it melts, until we are wet through from head to foot. There is no question of driving now. We take the sledge forward in short hauls, a foot or two at a time, wading along in the messy slush and forcing the snow down by our own weight to the water at the bottom; then we take the sledge once more, and with a shout and

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a heave get it on again a foot or so. In spite of the way we have packed our load, every particle of it is soaking wet, and often we are obliged to unload completely, and carry it forward, piece by piece, before we can get the sledge out of the hole where it has stuck fast. The dogs are useless, however willing they may be to help; it is all they can do to get along themselves, and often we are obliged to lift one of them out of a deep hole which it has made in its efforts to aid us in hauling the sledge.

It is horrible going, and we are longing to get up on land once more, where we can dry our things, and lie more or less comfortably. It is anything but pleasant lying side by side on a sledge, scarce three feet wide, even though we make ourselves as thin as possible, and we are wet through all the time, for the sleeping bags are soaked, and the clothes we have on when we creep into them are in like case.

It takes us nine days to cover the thirty miles to the islands, which we reach on the 16th of July, although we have been sledging hard the last few days, for a case of provisions acts like a magnet, the attraction of which increases as the distance decreases. We cannot even wait to take the sledge right up to the rocks, but leave it standing in the slush—there is no fear of its running away—and armed with a tin-opener, we hurry off, finding some fragments of ice to serve as a passable, though somewhat shaky, bridge over the broad channel which the melting ice has formed all round the coast.

The depot is well hidden under a big rock, but hunger has given us a sort of second sight, making it the easiest thing in the world to find anything in the shape of food, and we recognise the spot where it must be long before we reach it. Soon we are both kneeling beside the cask, sniffing at the very dubious odour which exudes from various holes in the bottom and lid,—the case has evidently fallen down from its original position, and lies now far down the beach

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within reach of even the smallest waves. This does not look well for the state of the contents, and it is with some misgivings we proceed to the solemn task of opening the case and laying bare the treasures within. Soon the lid is wrenched off, and everything spread out upon the snow. The water has done considerable damage, and spoiled all the biscuits, half of which are nothing but a big lump of mildew, from which, however, we manage to pick out a few fragments which may yet prove eatable. The oatmeal has suffered less, but is perfectly green with age. The sugar has disappeared; the chocolate is also green, and tastes of soap, while of a packet of macaroni only the three inches at the top are eatable; the rest we are regretfully obliged to throw away. One or two tins of preserves are likewise badly damaged. However, we have found food, though not as good as we had expected, and we hope to be able to use the best of the biscuits, assuring each other that mildew cannot be poisonous. Iversen even goes so far as to declare it must be wholesome, being after all a sort of "greenstuff!"

It is a good thing that we have increased our stock of provision, for the ice ahead looks unpleasantly like the foot of the inland ice, and the snow upon it is, to put it mildly, awful. We try to get forward, but sink in up to the waist, or deeper still if there happens to be a hole, and there is water everywhere. We must be content to lie up again, and give the snow time to melt, and we are also in high hope of finding game, having seen many bear tracks the last few days. Hovgaards Island looks more kindly from this quarter, the eternal glaciers have been replaced by a low, shelving beach, leading up to an apparently fruitful hillside, and on the south coast we can see a charming valley, where there certainly must be game.

Our hopes are high for here, it seems, is all we can desire—land which shows promise of game in plenty, and tracks

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of bear, on the ice as well as on shore, while many of the open-water lanes abound with timid but curious seal. Add to all this the fact that we have just finished an excellent dinner, consisting of forcemeat and cabbage, black pudding and boiled apples, with tea and a mouldy biscuit, and can now lie on a comfortable rock and bask in the sun, freed for once from the gnawing of hunger we have felt so long,—and it is not surprising that we regard the outlook in a more hopeful light than our success with the rifle hitherto would seem to warrant. To-day no shadows darken the future, which looks bright as the summer day which is spreading warmth and colour over all the ice and snow about us, and the desolate land behind. We are cheerful enough to-day; moreover, it is Sunday, the first Sunday we have strictly observed since we left the *Alabama*. And a full stomach is a splendid tonic, and provides matter, or rather leisure, for conversation. Having had next to nothing to eat for so long, we have naturally talked of next to nothing but eating, and it is pleasant for once to feel sufficiently satisfied in that respect to be able to talk of other things. To-day hunger is forgotten, and we lie all day at our ease on the warm stones, moving only as the moving shadow makes us shift farther into the sun. We talk of our comrades on board and make plans for the future, talk of our own place at home in Denmark, where the trees are now in full leaf and all is bright and warm. Here also it is summer, although we do not fully realise it until we land on the low south-easterly point of Hovgaards Island, Cape Anna Bistrup, where we intend to spend some days. Here also the vegetation, though not rich, is at its height, and we do not ask more, but walk about feasting our eyes on the little yellow and dark red flowers, the long, fresh grass, and the dwarf willows, that creep along the ground, and whose leaves are so small as to be scarce worthy of the name. All is fresh and green, and it is delightful to feel the thick,

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springy carpet of moss and grass beneath our feet; still more to see the innumerable tracks of animals which abound. For grass and flowers, however beautiful they may be, are not sufficient to support life, and the many fresh tracks of hare and bear, as well as some older prints of musk ox, are proof enough that we have reached at last the Eldorado we have been longing for. We wander about over the low, flat land, expecting every minute to come upon a musk ox, or at least a hare, but twilight falls without our having seen anything more than great flocks of little birds, about the size of sparrows,—too small to be worth shooting. When the sun has gone down behind the hills, and it begins to grow colder, we creep into our tent, the floor of which is built on a thick carpet of moss, and although the riotous feasting of a while ago must now give place to ordinary rations, we are happy enough, and lie long talking of the quantities of meat which we hope soon to see piled up outside. But it is not wise to count too much upon the proceeds of the chase, until the game lies dead at one's feet, and when, after two days' hard hunting, both on land and ice, we have not so much as a pound of meat to show for all our pains—not having even seen anything save a couple of seal—our high hopes fall considerably, and our extravagant rations of a pound a day are reduced to three-quarters. Very soon we shall be down to half a pound, and that means hunger—nasty, gnawing hunger.

Perhaps the game has all moved across to the valley on the southern side of the island, which is by far the largest stretch of country free from ice and snow, and we will not give up hope until we have tried there. It is a question, however, how we are to get there, for there is deep water on the ice, and holes innumerable, many of them going right through. We must make an attempt, however, for on this coast, ten miles long and half a mile wide, there is evidently no game to be got, and off we go with three days'

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provisions, weighing exactly three pounds. It is no pleasant journey, for the water is so deep that the dogs have to swim across the broad holes and lanes, and the farther we go the worse it gets, until at last we are obliged to carry dogs, load, and sledge over the lanes of water three feet deep. It is a chilly business, and takes time, but we are encouraged by the sight of the longed-for valley, now but a short distance away : there, at least, we *must* find game.

Soaked to the skin and wearied out, we pitch our camp on the broad, low beach, cut up in all directions by deep, swift streams, which make it difficult to find a fairly dry spot. As far as that is concerned, however, we might just as well have camped in the water, for scarcely have we got our tent up, when down comes the rain; and in a moment we are in the thick of a downpour as furious as any thunder shower at home, which is anything but pleasant in our little thin tent. Some kind of shelter, however, it yet affords, and we stay inside until we realise that it can be no worse outside, and the ever-pressing need of game induces us to brave the full force of the elements. Off we go, but we do not get far, for the streams are now so swollen that it is impossible to cross them, and our muscles are soon cramped from wading in the icy water. There is nothing for it but to wait until the weather clears up, and much disheartened we return to the tent, where the water from above and water from below make life anything but comfortable.

At last, however, the clouds pass, and the sun comes out once more—it is a fine morning; let us go out and kill something. To-day we must get across the streams somehow or other. And cross we do, reaching the higher land at last, where the clay soil is covered by a thick carpet of grass and moss. It is rich country here—there must be game. Eagerly we spy around in all directions, and the sight of an apparently fresh musk ox track encourages us at once. For twelve to fourteen hours we wander about the valley,

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exploring it in all directions, but without finding a single track save the first we sighted on our arrival.

The only living thing I meet with on my way is a big white snow owl, but it is shy, and though considerably startled by the sudden arrival of a rifle bullet close by, it manages to fly up clumsily to the top of a high cliff. It is impossible to get at it there, and I am forced to leave it alone, comforting myself with the thought that owl's flesh is probably not very good eating. The time goes slowly, when one wanders about for hour after hour over the rugged ground without finding any trace of game, and my thoughts are not pleasant companions. I had been so sure of finding something here, but it is almost certain now that we shall both be obliged to return empty-handed. And what then? We shall have to go down to the outer coast again, and try to keep ourselves alive by shooting seals. If this too fails, then we must make a move while our food lasts, and try to get down past Lambert's Land to Schnauder's Island, where there should be those five cases of provisions. There at any rate we can live for some time; but what if the ice breaks up before we can get so far? If the snow were not so bad, it would be best to go now while we still have some food left, but this is impossible, we must wait until it has melted away from the foot of the inland ice which lies between us and Lambert's Land. Wait, wait, always wait—it is exasperating to be unable to do anything but wait—waiting for a kindly Providence to send us game, waiting for the ice to improve—there is no knowing what we may have to wait for as things are. If the ice breaks up, and we still fail to find game, then it is all over with us. And as far as the ice is concerned, it cannot last very long, for the innumerable holes and cracks have made it so unstable that a single storm would suffice to sweep it all out to sea. Then we are penned up here until the autumn, and must find game or die—but how? We cannot do more than we have been

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doing—we are always wandering about in search of game which we never see; we have lain for hours on the edge of the ice by the open lanes, calling the seal without getting them within range, and if by any chance we manage to wound one, it disappears again into the depths. It is a dark look-out ahead, and dark thoughts cloud my mind as I march across the valley, eagerly spying on all sides for the faintest trace of a living thing. At last I turn, and as I walk back I catch sight of a little dark spot high up on the slope. I look to my rifle, hoping it may be a musk ox. The spot is moving, coming nearer; now it is on the skyline, and in the same moment my hopes are dashed—it is Iversen, doubtless as empty-handed as myself. He soon comes up, and it appears that he has at least had a little better luck, having shot a couple of ptarmigan. It is not much of a bag after four days' hunting, but much disappointment has made us thankful for small mercies.

It is no use wasting any more time here—better get back to the coast, where at least there is the chance of an occasional seal—and after a few hours' rest we are on our way back again.

Our dogs are in a bad way now, and poor little Girly is simply worn out; we have to put her on the sledge and carry her across whenever we come to water, drying her carefully with our anoraks the moment she gets wet by any chance. She is evidently grateful for the little attention, but restless, and can scarcely be persuaded to lie still on the sledge. Every time she hears one of the old familiar words of command which she has so long been accustomed to obey, she whimpers softly, and makes a movement to get off the sledge and do her best; but the poor little thing is so weak that she can scarcely keep her feet. And then she looks up at me so piteously, as if to say, "You see, I try all I can, but it's no good." It is heartrending to see the good faithful creature brought to such a pass, and I

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wish we could find it in our hearts to shoot her, but it is hard to shoot a dog one is so fond of in cold blood, and if only we could get meat for her she might yet recover, and be the same old Girly as before—the finest leader I have ever known.

Fortunately the other two are more or less fit, and if we can but find game, we may yet have three dogs left by the time the autumn sets in and sledging begins again.

We reach our old camping-place on the south-eastern point, and now begins a time of constant hardship and anxiety. We are out with our guns all the time, looking for a chance to use them. Iversen explores the hillsides, hoping to get one of the many hares which must have been here not very long ago, while I do sentry go along the edge of the broad tidal lane, watching for seal. Up and down, up and down all day, over the soft earth and the half-melted land ice, with rifle at my back or resting ready cocked in the crook of my arm—for there are seal in the water, and if they do show up there is no time to waste. It is weary work, marching up and down all day, or lying in cover behind a rock, waiting and hoping for seal, and the day drags slowly when the only spice of variety is the moment when one of them bobs up from the water. Trembling with eagerness one calls and whistles, the seal lies motionless in the water, listening, while one measures the distance with an anxious eye: 300 metres—too far—to shoot at that range would only frighten the seal, and then he is gone for ever. A moment more and he dives—in the shallow water it is easy to see in which direction he is swimming—ah! he is going off—and not until far away on the other side does the black head rise again—it almost seems as if they knew the danger. It can do no harm to try a shot now, the beast will not return in any case, and with careful aim the sights are aligned on the dark spot away in the water. For a moment there is hope, a nervous finger closes on the trigger,

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and the water splashes up about the seal, who disappears in a whirl of churning waves, with a thundering flap of his tail.

And as the day draws to a close, and still nothing has fallen to my gun, I cling to the hope that Iversen may have been more fortunate on land. But no, he returns, worn out and soaking wet, without having heard or seen a sign of game. Well, well, better luck next time; we cook our little ration of pemmican, drink a cup of tea, and swallow a miserable fragment of something mouldy, which we dignify by the name of biscuit.

Hunger seems to make us sleep more soundly than usual, and a day or two after our return from the fruitless hunting expedition to the valley, we are awakened by a furious barking from the dogs, and I almost recollect having half heard through my sleep the sound of heavy steps outside. We start up in confusion. Iversen, who is lying nearest the door, sticks out his head to see what is the matter. Quick as lightning he draws it back again, and seizes his gun—Sh! a bear! I follow suit, and we dash out of the tent. Iversen fires, wounding the beast in the hind-quarters, and off we go in chase, cutting our feet on the sharp stones, but never heeding, for there ahead of us, disappearing into the fog, is the great whitish-yellow body which means salvation for us all. We follow as well as we can, but a bear can move fast when fear drives, and in spite of the whip-lash of hunger over our heads, we cannot keep up the pace, and soon the wounded quarry is far ahead, and disappears among the pressure ridges in the fog. We halt to get our breath, and for the first time feel the cold, for we are standing barefooted in the snow. It is impossible to keep on like this, we must go back to the tent and get some clothes on, and then off again after the bear; he may not have taken to the water after all, but be following the coast. It is a marvel how we managed before to run at full speed

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over the stones where now we are scarcely able to walk, but we manage to limp back to the tent somehow, and start out again in pursuit, with Bruin and Ugly in leash. Down among the pressure ridges we find the blood-stained tracks of the bear, but they lead straight out to the tidal crack, and after a couple of hours' fruitless search we give it up and return. The bear had been just outside the tent when Iversen put out his head; he was not two paces away, and stood staring meditatively at his little namesake Bruin, who was tied up close to the tent, and, half mad with fright, was tugging at his chain to get away. But the real Bruin followed him, sniffing at him, and evidently trying to decide whether he was worth eating or not. But as Iversen put out his head he turned and made off, and was already some distance off before the former could get at his gun.

It is all Girly's fault—she is so ill that we could not find it in our hearts to tie her up, and as she is so hungry that she bites at everything within reach, we took our rifles into the tent for the first time. They always lie outside as a rule, and if this had been the case now, the bear could not have escaped. Girly, Girly, little does she know what she has cost us this night!

But we have learned a lesson, and now we give up our wanderings in search of game, taking it in turns, instead, to keep watch by the tidal crack, for if one bear can come up, others may, and we are determined to be ready for the next, day or night.

While we are still lamenting the loss of the bear, a death occurs in our little family; a death which causes me real sorrow, for it is Girly, who at last succumbs to the gradual starvation which is slowly but surely telling on us all. I hear a moaning sound outside the tent—it is Iversen's watch—and turning out to see what is the matter, I see Girly lying gasping on the ground and frothing at the mouth. It is evident that she has not long to live, but seeing the tent

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door opened, she gets to her feet and staggers towards it. I make room for her to come in—if that can ease her pain she is more than welcome; but before she can reach it she falls with her head on the tent-cloth, outside the door through which she has passed so many times to seek shelter from the cold and the storm. A shiver passes through her body, and her beautiful brown eyes which are gazing so piteously at me, grow dull; her head falls on her fore-paws, and my little leader is dead. Poor Girly! she was not fated to reach home at the end of the weary journey and live happily ever after. In spite of all her little failings, she was a splendid dog, and I bitterly regret the many times I have whipped her. Faults are forgotten, I remember only her virtues, and they were truly many. Not a mile of all the miles I have driven but she was my leader; she was leader on the trip up to Lambert's Land last autumn, and foremost all the way from the *Alabama* over the inland ice to here. She has had her corner in the tent with us, eaten of our food, and shared our joys, getting an extra morsel now and then when there was any special little feast, and she could look so sympathetic when things went wrong and gloom reigned over the little party, as if she knew all about it and was sorry for us. No wonder we feel as though we had lost a good and faithful comrade.

If she had her due, she should be buried reverently, and a stone placed on her grave, with the inscription, "Here lies Girly—her little life of faithful and untiring service ended." But we cannot afford sentiment; Iversen is already flaying the carcase, and Bruin and Ugly are looking on with their eyes starting out of their heads at the sight of meat. And so good-bye to Girly, fated in death as in life to serve the needs of others.

Unfortunately it is the sternest necessity which compels us, for in spite of all our efforts, nothing falls to our guns, and our little stock of provisions is decreasing with painful

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rapidity day by day. We are as sparing as we possibly can be with our own food, but it is impossible to reduce our daily ration to less than half a pound, and even the poor and unappetising dog's flesh is dealt out with the greatest economy. For it is becoming more evident every day that we shall be forced to live on what we have until we make the island south of Lambert's Land, where we ought to find food in plenty.

But the snow is still too deep; we must stay here some days yet before we can possibly hope to move farther on. We do not neglect our hunting; on the contrary, the more the pangs of hunger assert themselves, and the nearer we come to the end of our provisions—which is not far off—the more eager we become in our search for game, and march all day up and down along the edge of the tidal crack.

Shooting may be a pleasant enough pastime when one has enough to eat, and risks no more than one's reputation as a sportsman if one comes home empty-handed, but it is quite another thing when one's very life depends on the bag. A blank day is something more than merely annoying; it is dire misfortune, and it is with dismal reflections that we march up and down beside the narrow water lanes, spying in all directions for seal.

It would not be so bad, perhaps, if we never saw any at all, but seeing them, as we do every day, we grow furious with fate when we cannot manage to shoot a single one. We cannot understand it. If we set up a stone as a target, we never fail to shoot it down at the same or even greater distance, and without sighting longer or more carefully than we do at the seal, and yet we cannot hit a seal, even when it stays long enough above water to let us take good aim. Once or twice we fancy we have hit, but scarcely have we begun to rejoice at our good luck before the seal disappears.

Many days pass before we discover the reason of this incomprehensible bad luck, and at the same time our

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chances, poor as they seemed before, become still smaller. One day, being thoroughly sick of the hateful tidal crack, I go out along some small open lanes in the ice to see if the luck is better there, and when about a mile out from land I spy a seal. It is quite near; in a moment my rifle is against my cheek, and I sight dead on the shiny black head, and fire. The seal is hit, the bullet has crashed through its head, and I can see the splinters fly, as the water around becomes dyed with blood. I picture Iversen's joy when I return dragging my booty, I see the dogs half mad with delight over a rich hunk of blubber, and think of the splendid feeling of satisfaction with which we can turn in after a full meal. I do not stand long in meditation, however, but fling away my gun and hurry back to fetch some tackle to haul the seal to land. I have a light line only a few paces away, to reach it is the work of a moment, but as I turn, my blood literally runs cold; the seal is sinking. A big red bubble bursts as it goes down, and with it vanishes my hope.

For a moment I contemplate jumping in to try and wrest my lawful prey from the greedy sea, but dare not run the risk of cramp in the icy water without a comrade at hand. There is nothing to be done but to go back empty-handed along the road I had thought to pass in triumph, and bring my companion, instead of a hundred pounds of food, the sorry news that the seal are not yet fat enough to float. That this should be the reason of our ill luck had never crossed my mind, for, as far as I remember, wherever I have seen seal before, they have always floated earlier in the year than this. I may be wrong; under the influence of semi-starvation my memory may have been playing me tricks, but now at least I know that they do not float on the 28th day of July, at any rate not off the east coast of Greenland.

We are both considerably discouraged by the discovery, but our hopes rise once more a little on examining the depth of water in the tidal crack. It is not more than ten or

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fifteen feet, and we ought to be able to fish up a seal from that depth.

Once more we march up and down the water's edge, rifle in hand, and every nerve strained to catch the slightest sound or movement. Day and night our footsteps splash along the deep-trodden tracks where the water from the melting ice collects, and the weary days are made still more weary by the cold and clammy weather. We scarcely ever see the sun, it is always foggy, and every night the tidal crack is covered by a thick layer of young ice. The damp air is bitterly cold, but there is nothing to be done but march up and down, up and down, one's thoughts wandering aimlessly, and one's eyes restlessly searching, seeing nothing but the seal which now and then come up to gaze with great, stupid eyes at the solitary sentinel.

How we hate the sight of these creatures that come up out of the water without the slightest warning, stare at us for a moment, and with the faintest little movement disappear again beneath the surface, to swim off again and reappear behind the shelter of an ice-block to get another look, but always out of shot. To refrain from shooting is almost too much for our patience, but the desire for action must be curbed, unless we can manage to entice the quarry within range, and so we whistle as softly and coaxingly as we can. The seal stops at once and turns to listen, raising its head and shoulders out of the water. It is an anxious moment when the seal then disappears again—will it swim away beneath the water, or is it coming nearer? We follow with eager eyes the little ripple which is generally to be seen above the spot where the seal is swimming, and if it comes nearer, the rifle is kept pointing at it, ready to fire. But the seal is not such a fool as he looks. He calculates the distance, and rarely comes up within sure range. One must fire the moment a head appears, or the seal will be off again, with a slap of his tail, and not come back, and where so much

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depends on the aim it is difficult to keep the rifle steady. The shot rings out, the bullet speeds on its way, followed by our hearty wishes for a successful flight—it is death to the seal, but life to us. But the sudden movement has startled the creature, and down it goes like a flash, just in time to escape the missile which strikes the spot where the seal's head had been but a fraction of a second before. The brute has got away, and once more begins the monotonous march, but not before the one of us who is off duty sticks his head out from the tent to ask, "Did you hit?"

Now that we know that the seal sink when struck, we have regained confidence a little, for not all our shots have missed after all, and often when we see one sink, and are sure of having hit, we try to get the carcass to land. Our efforts are unsuccessful, however, for the strong current carries the body far away before it reaches the bottom.

One day, however, we feel sure of being able to wrest our lawful prize from the sea which has taken it, for Iversen, who has shot a seal at close quarters, has marked its position well. I am off duty, and start up from my sleep at the shot, listening intently for the second report which we have agreed upon as the signal for a kill. In a moment I am down at the water's edge. The seal has sunk, of course, but the marks are so good that we know within five feet where it should lie. A water telescope is hastily constructed with the aid of an empty petroleum can, a drag is made from a spade handle and some bits of iron, and we commence the work of salvage. A small sheet of ice does duty as a boat, but in vain we search the bottom through our water telescope, the mild weather of the last few days has swelled the streams, and the water is muddy. There is nothing to be seen, the bottom is quite invisible, but the drag is good, and we trust to that. For fifteen hours we toil trying to recover that one miserable seal, but at last we are obliged to give it up as hopeless. Now our patience is exhausted;

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it is no good going on like this : we must make a move, and take our chance, for game is evidently not to be had, and we have only a few pounds of pemmican left. For some days past we have been talking it over, but have had to put off our departure, on account of fog—possibly also because we still had some hopes of increasing our stock of provisions. Now, however, it is finally settled. I have already examined the ice a couple of days ago ; the snow is gone, and now there is only the water to be reckoned with.

This seems but a slight hardship in comparison with a continued stay on this accursed island, where we landed so hopefully three weeks ago, delighted at having found a spot where we could live on what fell to our guns on land. Then we were speechless with delight at the richness of the country, and could not find words to express our thankfulness for having reached good land at last. But day by day our hope grew fainter, and we have grown to hate the sight of the low shore which sloped down from the high cliff—the scene of so many bitter disappointments. It will be long ere we forget the long and lonely watches by the tidal crack, our increasing anxiety over the rapidly decreasing provisions—the very name of Hovgaards Island will remain in our memory for all time as synonymous with cold and hunger, hardship and disappointment. It is a relief to know that we are soon to leave the place, and we lose no time over our preparations.

We are far from being as fit as we could wish, apart from our half-starved condition. Iversen has been feeling poorly for some days, and I have sprained my ankle, slipping on a piece of ice, while Bruin and Ugly are mere skeletons, held together by skin and sinew. Our provisions are all but at an end, amounting to seven pounds of pemmican in all, but we have been living for some time now on half a pound a day, and hope that this may last us for another seven days. Indeed, we know it only too well, for we have learned by

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hard necessity that half a pound a day is enough to keep us alive. No wonder pemmican seems to us the most delicious dish that ever man tasted. It is our first thought when we wake in the morning, and it is a solemn moment when the pemmican boils. Spoonful by spoonful the precious stuff is shared out, lest one should get a drop more than the other, and even the well-scraped cooking pot is fairly divided, one licking the lid, and the other the pot itself, changing about at the next meal. This is eaten in the evening, twelve or fourteen hours later, and all day we long for the hours to pass, that we can get something to eat again. We are hungry enough, Heaven knows, but it will be worse when these last seven pounds are eaten—then we have nothing left but the dogs, and although Iversen feels their backs and declares with the air of an expert that they might be thinner, I am inclined to doubt the possibility, and am much afraid that the dog's flesh will not go as far as we have reckoned.

At last, on the 6th of August, the weather is clear enough for us to make a start with the sledge, but we are obliged to cross the tidal crack at an unfortunate time, as it is only possible to get over at very low water, and we are thus forced to start in the middle of the day. It is hot, and heavy going, so we camp after having left the coast-water behind, hoping to go on again during the night, when the sun is at its lowest. In spite of the fine cold weather, however, we are obliged to lie up for more than twenty-four hours, as my ankle is so swollen that I cannot get my kamicks on. There is no difficulty, however, about cold fomentations up here, and next night I am ready to start again.

And now the real fight begins.

CHAPTER XI

A RACE AGAINST HUNGER

Sledge-boating—Lambert's Land—Game at last—An old camp—Death of Bruin—A doubtful dish—Leave Lambert's Land—The last dog—Reach Schnauder's Island—Hunger—The depot at last—A new disease—Food again—A race with death—The depot of despair.

THE going is good, and the ice free from snow; we make good progress, but at the cost of some exertion, for the ice is full of little holes of about a foot deep, caused by the quicker thawing round stones or lumps of earth, and the thin layer of ice which covers these holes is not strong enough to bear us. We move with caution, but it is impossible to avoid them altogether, and we put up with it, as we have learned by now to put up with so many other little difficulties. It is to be hoped that we have grown more patient through these many hardships, but it cannot be denied that natural impatience breaks out now and again, and we use language with regard to these same holes which would scarcely be justifiable when applied to the ice generally. For on this our first day's sledging after the long halt, the ice is really good and level, rising and falling in long, easy slopes, just like the inland ice, and there are no big ponds or long open lanes. Certain disabilities, however, are yet to be found on this extension of the inland ice, especially as regards sledging in summer, for the water from the melting ice above must find an outflow somewhere,

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and in nearly every valley there is a river-bed, both broad and deep, lying right across our course from west to east. The sides are almost perpendicular, but we have to get over somehow, and are sometimes fortunate enough to find a snow bridge which has withstood the heat of summer and is now beginning to harden in the early cold.

But if the rivers are many, the same cannot be said for the bridges, and as a rule we are obliged to drive along the bank until we find a place where the depth of water does not exceed the height of our kamicks, and take the sledge across there. We make good progress, however, in spite of the heavy work and the loss of time occasioned by having to carry our worn-out and unwilling dogs across these same watercourses, and although one is often inclined to overestimate the distance covered after a hard day's work, I reckon that we have made eight or nine miles towards our goal by the end of the first day. A good day's journey is almost as fine a tonic as a full meal, and by the time we have managed to get warm and fairly dry in our sleeping bags, we are both in better spirits than we have been for a long time, and drop off to sleep with the heartfelt wish that next day's run may prove as good.

It is but rarely that we see our wishes fulfilled, however, at any rate of late, and prospects do not look bright when we shortly after the commencement of our night's work find ourselves coming down from the inland ice on to some old floes. The ice itself is good enough, but there are innumerable water-holes and channels to be crossed. A boat would be more to the purpose here, but it is no use wishing for a boat when one has nothing but a sledge; the only thing to do is to make it as much like a boat as possible, and in this we succeed so well that the contrivance is at last capable of bearing the whole load, with one man and the dogs, having moreover one advantage over an ordinary boat, viz. that nothing can get wet if it turns over—which,

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I must admit, happens fairly often. This sledge-boat was not invented all at once, but is the final result of many alterations and experiments. The orders of the Committee demanded that I should take with me such gear as would enable me to cross water if necessity arose, and in accordance with this demand we brought with us from the *Alabama* a piece of sailcloth which could be wrapped round the sledge. This, with snow-runners and ice-spears, formed the skeleton of the boat. The sailcloth has done, and still does duty, as an inner cover for the tent, and on stormy days up on the inland ice we have often been thankful for the heavy canvas, which formed an excellent additional protection against cold and wind. Here, however, it is even more valuable. The whole load is stowed away in this one big sheet, which is then lashed tightly over it, and the high cubic capacity of the resulting bundle, containing tent, sleeping bags and gear, makes it capable of supporting the weight above mentioned. The bundle is made as long and flat as possible, and lashed fast to the sledge, and there we have our sledge-boat, a hybrid contrivance which floats as well on the water as it runs on the ice.

Whenever we come to a pond or water-lane which is too wide for us to throw the dogs over, we hang them up on the load, one at each side, and as I have longer legs, and can better stand the water than Iversen, I wade across with a line made fast to the bows of the sledge. With a splash the sledge-boat takes the water, sending up a shower on either side, the dogs howl, and Iversen springs hastily on board, while I haul in the line as hard as I can. Getting across is easy enough, but it is heavy work hauling up the other side. If the water is broad and apparently not very deep, we push her across, standing one on each side of the sledge with a pole, and devoutly hoping that the depth of water may not exceed three feet, for if it does, one of us will have to get out and wade, which neither of us are very

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anxious to do. We are highly pleased with our sledge-boat, and in particular we appreciate the delight of being able to creep into a dry sleeping bag every night.

The dogs are now unfortunately more a burden than a help, being utterly worn out, and with their paws frightfully cut about by the sharp ice. Bruin can scarcely walk at all, and as there is so much water to be crossed, it is scarcely worth while to tie him up and let him loose again every time, so he rides on the sledge most of the night. He lies perfectly still, not even taking the trouble to make himself as comfortable as possible, but just hanging on anyhow. Only when we reach water does he wake from his apathy, his eyes start out of his head with fear, and the poor beast makes a futile attempt to crawl higher up on the load, for it is impossible to avoid wetting him, and water is something sledge-dogs strongly object to. Ugly can still walk, and even haul a little now and then, but he is a clever beast, and knows that his place is on the sledge. As soon as we come to water, he turns round and walks quietly up to Iversen, who lifts him up on to the load, save when the channel is so narrow that he can be thrown across.

Ugly doesn't exactly like this method of transport, but it is no good whining; Iversen, who has grown quite an expert at the work, takes him by the head and tail, swings him backwards and forwards once or twice, and sends him with a strong throw over to the other side where I stand ready to catch him in my arms, if he doesn't fall short.

There are many hindrances and interruptions in the course of such a day's sledging—or rather, day's work, for our method of progress can no longer be called sledging. As the season advances and water more and more takes the place of snow, we ourselves gradually develop into nondescript amphibious creatures. We have not yet got accustomed to the change, however, and look with longing

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eyes at some little rocky islands on our way. It looks a tempting place to camp, we could dry all our gear, and ourselves as well, and heaven knows we need it! But we dare not lose time, and it is also quite possible that there would be too much water round the rocks. On the third day, however, the ice is so bad that we have only a couple of miles to show for some ten hours' hard work; the dogs are almost dead owing to the constant duckings, and Iversen is likewise suffering from continual immersion. Heedless, therefore, of possible consequences, we decide to allow ourselves a brief rest in comparative comfort even at the cost of many hours' subsequent toil and hardship. Possibly, however, it is worth it after all, for Iversen feels fitter after the one night's proper rest in dry things, and even the dogs seem better, if one can use the word when we expect them to fall down dead every minute. On leaving our resting-place among the rocks next night we have only three pounds of pemmican in all—enough for three days; when that is finished, well, we have the dogs; we only hope that they may live as long, for dogs' flesh is not appetising at the best of times, and still less when the dog takes it into his head to die without waiting to be shot. Nevertheless, I must admit that we feel not the slightest qualm at the thought of eating dog, on the contrary, we are looking forward to it, having some idea of making a full meal for once. Iversen in particular is waiting impatiently for the great event, and cannot leave the dogs alone. Every time we halt he goes round feeling them, to see if they are getting thinner. On one occasion, when I confessed my ignorance as to how one can judge of this from the outside, he gave me a lesson, explaining how a country butcher feels if a beast is fat enough to kill. Iversen is country-bred, so it comes natural to him, but I will not deny that I gradually come to take as keen an interest in their condition as he himself, and we both shake our heads mournfully

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when at last there is no denying that the beasts are pitiaibly thin and poor.

A journey of thirty miles cannot last for ever, especially when the first two days have reduced the distance by fourteen miles, and on the 15th of August, after a seven days' march, we finally set foot on Lambert's Land, utterly exhausted with cold and hunger.

Although we have learned by bitter experience that not every apparently promising piece of country is rich in game, the place here looks so free from ice and generally favourable that our hopes rise immediately, in spite of all the doubts we had on the way. So great is our anxiety to put it to the test, that tired out as we are, it is yet impossible to sleep, and after a few hours' rest, and a cup of tea—which is all we have left now—we start off to explore.

We separate in order to cover as much ground as possible, Iversen going inland, while I hurry along the coast, with eyes and ears strained to catch the slightest sign or sound. But it is tiring work, even when every fibre in one's body is clamouring for food, and as time goes on, and watchfulness remains still unrewarded, the strained senses grow dull, and the unnatural energy which flared up at the sight of the goodly land dies down again and disappears. Utterly tired out, I tramp mechanically over the stony land, which now seems hopelessly desolate. Game we must have, for we have nothing to eat, but we cannot conjure up the beasts that are not there; we can explore every inch of the country, but to little use if nothing is to be found. I march for hours without seeing fresh tracks—there are plenty of old ones, both of musk ox and hare, but this does not prove that either are now to be found here; they may have been here a year ago—for tracks lie long when trodden into the soft clay. Every print is carefully examined, on the chance of its being fresh, but

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always with the same result, and with each succeeding disappointment the pang of hunger increases.

Suddenly I hear a chattering noise above my head, and looking up, I discover a whole flock of ptarmigan sitting on a steep hillside. Game at last—the game we so sorely needed—and to my despair I remember that I am armed with a rifle. Shooting ptarmigan with a rifle is ticklish work, and I soon decide to go off in search of Iversen, who has the shot-gun, and then try to find the birds again. I move off carefully to avoid frightening the game, and marking down the place, start off inland, heedless of tracks, to find Iversen with all speed. Up and down over the hills, no sign of my companion, until—what was that? Some one singing? It is Iversen right enough—but singing? It is long since either of us had any heart to sing, and now to hear his old marching song from the happy days on the inland ice—

“What’s the use of pining,
What’s the sense of tears?”

ringing out over the rocks of Lambert’s Land—

“Iversen, ahoy!” I shout at the top of my voice, and hear as a faint echo his answering “ahoy!”

“Any luck?” I shout back, and stand listening in breathless excitement. The song gives promise of good news; half-starved men do not sing save at the prospect of a speedy change in their condition—but for a moment an icy fear lays hold on me, for it seems as though he hesitated to answer. At last—what does he say—*twelve*—I can scarcely believe my ears—he calls again—“Twelve ptarmigan, my boy!”

It seems too good to be true—twelve? I call back, “Did you say twelve?” and joyfully he shouts, “Yes, twelve, twelve, twelve!” and the echo bounds from rock to rock—“twelve, twelve!” Thank Heaven! we have

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food for the next few days—and I start off at a run towards Iversen, eager to feast my eyes on the splendid bag.

A few minutes later we are sitting side by side, gazing with delight at the twelve lovely birds, which Iversen has laid out in a row. He tells how and when each was shot—one on that hill—and these—a hen and five youngsters—together, and look here, he adds, dragging forth a headless cock, “I got him with a single bullet!”—“With a rifle?—Well, I’m d—d!” It is long since either of us have cared—or dared?—to swear, but in our astonishment and delight the little breach of etiquette is passed over.

Then off we go to the tent. True, I also have a flock of ptarmigan, though they are not yet shot, but I am ashamed to say that we are too hungry to go after them, which fact perhaps assists us in coming to the somewhat hasty conclusion that it must have been the same flock which Iversen afterwards saw. So we wend contentedly homewards filled with the one great thought of food. Time after time we stop to count them, and make sure we have not dropped one on the way, but we reach the tent with our bag undiminished. The feast that followed I need not describe. Inside the tent we revelled on boiled ptarmigan, and outside the dogs devoured bones, entrails, feathers, everything; nothing was wasted.

We are tempted to stay longer in these apparently well-stocked preserves, but as there seems but little prospect of finding big game—a necessity if we are to make a stay—we take the more prudent course, and next night are once more on our way, moving southward among the ponds and the wide water-lanes, which we negotiate as best we can. We are not always fortunate, however, and scarcely have we left the land behind and started work in earnest when we are forced to stop, having managed to get ourselves and our gear wet through. Cheered by the last two good meals, we were in unusually high spirits when we started,

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and the widest lanes we had as yet encountered were crossed without mishap. Emboldened by our good fortune, and further encouraged by the sight of good ice, apparently dry, on the other side of a forty to fifty feet crack, we drive the sledge out into the water, without examining it more closely. The bottom being visible all the way, there was no danger of the deep holes, which are the only things we fear with our sledge-boat.

It never pays to do things in a hurry, and we lose three-quarters of a day through trying to save the five minutes it would have taken us to examine the place properly. Scarcely is the sledge in the water, with ourselves and the dogs on top, when it begins to cant over to one side. I thrust down my pole at once, to try and right the sledge, and discover, to my horror, that the water is more than three and a half feet deep. The sledge lies over more and more, there is nothing for it but to get out myself and try and keep it from capsizing. We get across at last, with nothing worse than a fright and an exceedingly cold bath, but not before the water has got in under the canvas covering in such quantities as to necessitate unloading and repacking the sledge. It is not a cheerful prospect to go for half a night with our clothes dripping wet, so we camp, and add our contribution to the paving of a certain road by resolving to get up early and sledge innumerable hours to make up for lost time.

Stern necessity compels us to risk once more the crossing of the broad tidal crack, and try a landing on the southeastern point of Lambert's Land in search of game, for though twelve ptarmigan may appear untold wealth when one has not seen flesh or fowl for many days, the stock soon diminishes when two starving men begin to eat. In spite of the strictest economy, we cannot get more than six meals out of the twelve birds. But the one good bag has made us hopeful. We could of course keep on our way towards

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Schnauder's Island, eating dog when our next and last meal of ptarmigan is gone, but we feel that we owe it to our two faithful beasts to make one more attempt to manage without eating them. We might perhaps even save their lives, for a single musk ox would do wonders, and musk ox there certainly should be, on this good land, which seems quite clear of ice.

We camp quite near the spot where we pitched our tent last autumn, and examine all the empty tins with care, on the chance that we in our abundance then might have left behind some scraps of food; the merest fragment would be welcome indeed. We find nothing, however, and after having turned over everything and scraped each old tin clean, we are obliged to be content with the only thing we dare allow ourselves: a big bowl of steaming hot tea, very weak, and without sugar—let alone biscuits, which we haven't tasted now, it seems, for ages. The most cheerful part of this not very cheerful meal is our edifying conversation, inspired by the recollection of all the lovely food we had last time we were here. Iversen grows quite melancholy over the thought that he didn't care for pemmican then, and gave most of his share to Jørgensen and me: "If I'd only known," he says with a sigh, "I'd have eaten more!" I also wish that I had known—it would have been easy to pack away a few tins of pemmican and some biscuits where they could be found again. However, it's too late to think of that now, and we turn in to get some sleep; we have our last two ptarmigan for the next meal, and then—well, we have our guns. Either we find game, or Bruin departs this life.

We separate, as before, and Iversen toils painfully up a steep hillside, dragging his feet like an old man. Poor fellow, it is not only hunger he has to fight against; ever since we left Hovgaards Island he has been ill, and gradually growing weaker. He has been struggling for a long time

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against the ever-increasing weakness brought on by pain and fatigue, but there comes a time when the most hardened arctic explorer must give in, and nothing can be done if food and rest are not forthcoming. Iversen is pretty near that stage, and as I wander along in search of game, I think dismally of what will happen then. However gladly I would make some return for all the care and kindness he showed me when I lay on the sledge and had not strength to stand, it would be impossible to carry him in that way now that we no longer have the dogs. He must keep up until we reach Schnauder's Island. Once there we can get food and rest, but until we get there he must march on, and take his share of the work, cost what it may. It is a comfort, at any rate, that he has no pain in his legs, but whether it is scurvy or merely general exhaustion brought on by starvation and frequent duckings we cannot tell. It is a cheerless prospect altogether, and is not improved by the fact that I fail to find the slightest sign of game. Now and then I catch sight of Iversen up on a hillside in the distance; he is not singing to-day, for he has found nothing. Hour after hour goes by, with no change save the painfully distinct sensation of growing more and more empty inside, until at last it seems as if the internal organs themselves had disappeared entirely. And one's whole consciousness becomes concentrated into one importunate demand for food—food—food. It must be easier, I think, to write of hunger when one has not felt it—the reality is indescribable.

After marching for six hours without seeing a sign of game I discover Iversen once more, down in a little valley; he is sitting with his back to me, and his whole attitude, as it seems to me, expressive of utter despair. Yet he has no cause to be despondent, for on hearing me approach, he turns round and holds up a hare. It is only a little one, a youngster in its first year, but it means a meal, and heaven knows we need it. But he has found no trace of big game—well,

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Bruin must die; we have done our best to save his life, but providence has decreed otherwise. Before returning home, however, to carry out the execution, we must have a rest, and we lie for some time on the sunny spot where I had found Iversen. Happening to glance at his face, I notice a fleck of blood on his cheek. "Have you hurt yourself?" I ask anxiously. "No," replies Iversen, flushing a little. "I—I only ate the tongue, and a few loose bits that were shot away. I've got some more here—won't you . . .?"

"Hare soup is a delightful dish, when properly prepared." That is the sort of thing they say in the cookery books. Ours must have been done to perfection, for the only fault we can find with it is that there is too little of it. Had we but some few gallons of the same, with half a score of hares, we should be in the seventh heaven; as it is, half a baby hare and a small mugful of soup is but short rations for a starving man.

"Bruin" has departed this life, it is to be hoped for a better. Iversen attends to the villain part of the business, shoots, flays and quarters the poor beast, singing to himself the while. I am inside busy with the soup, and the singing comes as somewhat of a surprise. Bruin is Iversen's old leader, and his favourite dog—but perhaps it is a funeral dirge in honour of the brave that are no more. It doesn't sound very dirge-like, however, and I turn out to see what it is all about. Iversen is down by the tidal crack, washing the meat; he stops his song on seeing me, and a broad smile spreads across his haggard face as he calls out cheerfully, "Hurrah! This is something like! Hare to-day and dog to-morrow—we're going to get fat after all!"

I have my doubts as to our getting fat on the poor remains of Bruin, deceased, but it seems a pity to spoil Iversen's anticipations; I merely observe that I hope we may, but Bruin will have to last us for three days. This doesn't trouble him in the least, however; he holds up a

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piece—"good heavy lump that !—and there's a liver for you ! The heart we can eat too, and the tongue, but the head 'll have to be thrown away, I'm afraid." There is not a morsel of flesh on it, but Iversen sits turning the dry bone over and over, quite jealous at the thought of handing it over to Ugly. But Ugly must also be kept alive somehow—for three days. And then it will be his turn.

We have several times noticed that the dogs could not eat the entrails of their dead companions without suffering for it afterwards, and on the inland ice, and later also along the coast, we have always taken care to hide them so that the dogs could not get at them. So we fling the entrails into the tidal crack : only the liver looks so good, that although we strongly suspect it of being poisonous, we cannot bring ourselves to throw it away at once. We dare not eat it, however, without doing what we can to find out if it is eatable or not, and by good fortune I happen to remember a little silver photo-frame which I still have. We will cook it in the pot with the liver, and if it doesn't change colour, we shall reckon it is safe enough. Next morning the liver is put on to boil, and the little silver trinket solemnly dropped in, while we look on in anxious expectation. We have fastened a string to the frame, and haul it up now and then to see how it is getting on. The silver loses its polish, and gets dark—but it doesn't look very poisonous as yet. It is quite exciting. We are neither of us certain as to what it ought to look like in case of poison, but finally we agree that it ought to be green, if the object is to be regarded as really deadly, and we hope that the dull, dark colour which the silver has gradually acquired is due to the heat, and the water, which by now is perfectly yellow.

Twenty minutes pass—thirty—and the silver is not "green"—the poison ought to have had time to work by now. The liver is declared eatable, and Iversen, who is a better hand at this sort of thing than I, cuts it up into slices

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and fries it—in water. I am inclined to the opinion that some sort of fat is necessary to properly fry a thing, but Iversen disposes of all my arguments by assuring me that one always pours water over a joint when roasting, and as the question after all is of purely academic interest—we have not an ounce of fat if we wanted it—it doesn't much matter who is right.

We are determined to be careful, however; we will not eat too much, and a little can't do any great harm, even if it should turn out to be poisonous. Iversen announces that it is "done"—the pieces are carefully divided, and for some minutes deep silence reigns in the tent. We taste it critically—dog's liver is after all a new dish—but the first little mouthful is speedily followed by one considerably larger, and two broad grins of delight, with inarticulate murmurs of satisfaction, announce that we find it delicious. Our fears are banished, and the remainder of the liver disappears in a very short time.

That was something like a meal! Now for a little rest—just half-an-hour or so—and then we can start. But somehow or other I feel sleepy, and Iversen is yawning under cover of his sleeping bag—funny—we have slept all day, that ought to be enough. However, we can take just forty winks, there is plenty of time, and soon we both fall asleep—to wake up late next day with a splitting headache. Here at least we can with a good conscience aver that it "must have been the liver"—for what else could it be? And we decide to leave Ugly's liver alone, although with some regret, for the last was really delicious.

We have lost a night, but it doesn't matter very much, for it is blowing hard, the weather is comparatively warm, and the going consequently very heavy, and we both agree that the rest has done us good, though somewhat against our will, and we hope, as we have done so many times before, that it will turn out for the best in the long run.

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We make a start next night, after having used part of the day in getting our tent and gear over to the other side of the broad and dangerous tidal cracks, or rather channels, for some of them can be as much as fifty feet across. Out on the ice, with the tidal channels behind and thawed holes of unknown depth ahead, we are obliged to camp again, and wait till night. The low midnight sun usually sends the thermometer down below freezing-point, and although the resulting crust of ice is far from being strong enough to bear us over the broad sheets of water, it yet makes the surface of the old ice so much firmer that the work of hauling the sledge is reduced by one-half.

At midnight, on the 19th of August, we leave Lambert's Land, and start on our fifteen-mile trip to Schnauder's Island, where we hope to find the big depot mentioned in Thostrup's letter to Mylius Erichsen. We are longing to reach it, for although we have had a fairly good meal of dog's flesh and soup, my doubts as to the sustaining value of this food prove but too well founded, and the keen desire for decent provision, especially biscuits and farinaceous food, incites us to fresh exertions. Passing over a narrow belt of last year's ice, dotted everywhere with pools of water, we reach the extended slopes of the inland ice, where the going is better, and in spite of the fact that we lose a whole hour getting across a broad and bottomless fissure, the distance which separates us from our goal is reduced from fifteen to ten miles. Only ten miles more and then—decent food once more, for to tell the truth, we have had about enough of dog's flesh. It leaves a slimy feeling in the mouth—the only indication, moreover, of having eaten, for it is neither satisfying nor sustaining.

Ugly is gone now, and it is quite a relief no longer to see the poor suffering beast—he could not even walk at the last. One little treat he had, however, before he died, we gave him a good feed of Bruin's bones and a lump of Danmark

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Expedition's dog-feed. This last we have ourselves tried to eat, but in vain—we cannot get it down, so Ugly had it. Poor beast—he lay on the sledge crunching at the bones, fancying, no doubt, that all our troubles were over. Well, his are, at any rate, and now we eat him for his pains.

Unfortunately we are forced to lie up again, for Iversen must have a rest, and as Bruin's liver could not be called really deadly—we being, as Iversen with perfect truth observes, still alive—we eat Ugly's as well, with the same result as before. The liver acts as a powerful narcotic; Iversen is the first to fall asleep, and although I try to keep my eyes open, I very soon follow his example, dropping the kamick which I am repairing and dozing off to dream of food—enormous quantities of food, huge smoking joints, mountains of bread and butter, with great green piles of vegetables and salad. But it is all moving, moving continually; shifting just out of reach. I run and run, it is always there, a little farther on: at last I fall and cut my head so that the blood runs down my face. Then I wake, bathed in sweat, and with a frightful headache. Dog's liver is not wholesome—fortunately, however, we are not likely to encounter the temptation again.

The inland ice turns out quite good just here, and we make such good progress that by the end of the second night's sledging we have only seven or eight miles more to Schnauder's Island, and once there, we hope that the worst will be over, for in the first place we shall find food, and in the second place the temperature ought soon to be below freezing-point day and night, and it cannot be long before the midnight sun disappears. We are looking forward to its departure, for we have got all we are likely to get out of the summer, and the autumn cold must soon make the young ice strong enough to bear, which will save us an enormous amount of work. We glare angrily at the sun away there in the north—will it never go? We are longing

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to see the last of summer, and to feel the autumn frost. I am aware that it is rank heresy to speak in such tones of the midnight sun, which poets cannot find words enough to praise; one ought, of course, to paint a splendid sky, with colours such as never mortal saw—but—let me whisper treason to the reeds—the midnight sun is just a common or garden picture of the sun set low in the sky. One reads so much about the midnight sun—it may be true, but I can only say, blasphemous as it may seem, that any one who wants to see a picture of the midnight sun needs but to get up early any frosty morning, when the sun is a couple of diameters above the horizon, turn round three times and call the east the north—and there you are. There is your midnight sun; a very ordinary reddish disc, with no admixture of undreamed-of colour or mysterious reflections. If there are clouds about it can be a fine, a splendid sight—but nothing in the least more wonderful than one can see at home. A poet may on occasion see things a mere sailor would not see, but a sailor cannot very well be colour-blind, and it may be that the robust and brass-bound man is not more given to exaggeration than he of the fluent pen. This much, at least, I dare aver, the midnight sun is nothing but the sun, just as a man may see it rise or set in any other land.

However, beautiful or not, the weather will certainly be colder when it is gone, and we have seen enough of it to willingly exchange all its beauty for a few degrees of cold, and leave the eternal day for alternating light and shade, so that we can do our sledging by day, under ordinary conditions.

The time, however, is but short, and when the few weeks of evenly divided day and night are at an end, we shall no doubt be sorry for all our hard words about the sun. Now, however, we have but one thought—beyond the eternal desire for food—to get on as fast as possible and make an end of this eternal journeying.

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The third day's sledging begins badly. First a heavy downpour prevents us from leaving the tent, where, if not dry, we are at least less wet than out of doors—and when the summer shower has passed, there is so much water on the ice that we are unable to start before late at night. We have once more yielded to temptation and pitched our camp on land, and now the tide gives us a deal of trouble: not broad cracks, but a mass of water on the ice-foot. We are forced to wait until it has so far subsided that we can take the deeper holes without getting our kamicks full of water, and the one day's shelter on dry land costs us three cold hours of the night. We take it calmly, however, for six hours' sledging is more than enough for us in our weakened condition, and if the going is at all decent, and there is not too much water to get round, we ought in that time to be able to reach the northern point of Schnauder's Island, which is only five or six miles away.

But we don't. We do not even get half way, for we encounter lane after lane of open water right across our course, and as all of them are cut right through the ice, we dare not risk sailing the sledge across the broad channels, but have to get along as best we can. Now and then a tiny sheet of ice is made to serve as a ferry, at times we both creep cautiously across a crushed-up mass of young ice, and having reached firm ground on the other side, proceed to haul the sledge across the same doubtful bridge, often towing it over broad channels which we ourselves cross by jumping from one lump of ice to another. Thanks to the canvas cover, however, and the lightness and extent of our load, we manage to cross a couple of broad lanes where there is no way round, and though it all takes time, we get along pretty well. Moreover, the going improves considerably when after passing the last crack we leave the frail and rotten last year's ice behind, and get up on to the extended foot of the inland ice, which, though hilly, is thick and perfectly safe.

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Here also, however, the water can prove a difficulty, as we know to our cost, but it is rarely that the cracks go right through, and when it does happen, we generally happen to find a bridge several winters old, and far more solid than the last year's ice. There may be holes, of course, but the ice itself can bear, and there is not so much danger of an ice-cold bath caused by the breaking of an edge when we jump across.

To-night we encounter one of these cracks, which is worse than usual, being at least one hundred feet across and lying in a valley fifteen or twenty feet deep. There are tongues of fairly solid ice, however, jutting out along both banks, and although we are obliged to trust to a horribly thin crust in the middle, which gives way under us once or twice, we manage to get over without further mishap than getting more than usually wet. Fairly content with the distance covered, but utterly worn out, we camp on the farther side, having wasted more than an hour over the last two hundred feet.

If we only had a little pemmican to eat when the tent is pitched, we should not mind being fatigued, for pemmican is easily cooked, and then one can lie down and rest. But dog's flesh must be boiled for a long time to make it eatable at all, and it is hard to keep awake until it is done. We let it stew for about an hour and a quarter—we cannot wait any longer, and for the last five or ten minutes we are wakeful enough, digging and poking at the meat with a knife or a sail-needle, to see if it is tender. As soon as we think it is cooked, soup and meat are divided as fairly as possible; the soup is what we value most, for there is not much meat, and what little there is is tough as leather. I have considerable difficulty in eating it, for my teeth are still loose from the scurvy, and to my great annoyance I cannot even pick the bones clean. I gave them to Ugly the first day, but Iversen thought this a wicked waste, and next time he

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took them over himself when I could not get any more off them. He has good teeth, and indeed it is well for him, as things are. Nothing is wasted, the very bones are cracked for the sake of the marrow, which Iversen insists that he can find inside. He is welcome to what he can get out of them, for I have not been able to get enough to taste what it was like, and finding the nutriment obtained out of all proportion to the trouble involved, I generously leave the bones to him, with all therein contained. We had a little—a very little—tea still left when we started from Lambert's Land, and this we boil up over and over again. The last lot of tea-leaves have now done duty five or six times, so that the hot water, with which we wash down our very scanty meal, can only by a considerable effort of imagination be called tea.

We have not much more of anything to wash down, however; our whole stock of provision consists of some ribs of dog and half a shoulder—about as much as we hitherto have eaten in one day—and with this we hope to reach the depot.

Towards noon on the 25th of August we reach Schnauder's Island, after a very heavy journey. The ice-foot had been unusually rough and hilly along the coast, and though our sledge is now considerably lighter than it used to be, it is quite heavy enough for us, and we have to lift it up the steep slopes in standing hauls. Up on the top the going is good, the ice being perfectly level, save for a few narrow watercourses, but in order to reach land we are obliged to cross twenty or thirty deep valleys, so we are not allowed to enjoy the level ice for long. We find a place where it is fairly smooth, and let the sledge slide down by itself; we are no longer able to run so fast ourselves, but follow on behind. It stops somewhere at the bottom and then we have to get it up on the other side. When at last we reach the top, and are looking forward to a good level run, we find another valley just ahead, and another, and another. At

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length, however, we are over the last of them, and drive along the coast on level ice, but we are at least thirty feet above the tidal crack, and keep a sharp look out for a spot where the ice is lying in to land. Unfortunately there is a broad belt of water between ice and land, and it looks as if we should once more be forced to camp here on the ice and wait until the water subsides. Fortune favours us, however, and on turning a sharp corner we espy a little rock half buried in the surrounding ice, sloping gently towards the land.

Five minutes later we have reached it, and found a sheltered spot to pitch the tent, for we ought to rest here for some days, especially Iversen, who seems utterly exhausted. It has taken us twenty-three days and endless toil to cover the forty miles from Hovgaards Island. We have not been sledging every day, but with the exception of the two days' hunting on Lambert's Land we have not had one day's lying up that was not absolutely necessary, either for Iversen or myself.

But the more it has cost to reach one's goal the happier one is to get there, and now that we are here, with the prospect of food, we are cheerful enough, as far as we can be in our weakened and exhausted state. We have yet our fears, however, and serious fears enough; what if we fail to find the depot after all?

Well, there is game, of course, but after our experiences in this respect the less said about that the better; it is not a cheerful prospect to know that one's next meal is still walking or flying about an island which we have not even had time to explore.

We put our fears aside, as far as possible, assuring ourselves that the depot will be easy enough to find, and that we shall have all we can possibly desire as soon as we have rested sufficiently to go out and look for it, for we have had a hard eight-hours' day, and must rest a while before

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starting to work again. But the knowledge that our precious food is now so near fills us with irresistible longing. In vain we close our eyes, endeavouring to chase importunate thoughts away, sleep will not come. It is an innocent joy enough to lie and dream of the delight of tasting hard biscuit once more, but it is not conducive to sleep, and after lying for an hour growing more and more wide awake, I begin to feel pretty sure that Iversen is in like case, and whisper very softly, so as not to wake him if he has forgotten his hunger in dreams, "Are you asleep?" But Iversen is very much awake; scarcely are the words out of my mouth when he jumps up—"Shall we start?"—Well, there is no reason to wait any longer, since we are both longing to be off, but first of all we must fortify ourselves with a meal, the last of the dog's flesh. We never waste more time over cooking than is necessary, and to-day it does not take long, for there are but three meagre ribs to each, and that we both agree ought not to take more than half-an-hour. We gnaw and scrape at the bones, breaking them up at last in order to get all there is to be got out of them, but it is not much, and at the end of the meal we are just as hungry as before. Well, there is no more to be had—we have not an ounce of food left, so we take in our belts a couple of holes and are ready to start.

It is good going along the coast, mostly level beach, and we move quickly, excited and strengthened by the thought of food—food in plenty—which awaits us. When we reached the island we were so tired that we both declared we could not go a step farther, and even sat down to rest before pitching the tent. Now, however, after a couple of hours' rest, we can not only walk but even run. And run we do—not lightly and actively, it is true, but waddling awkwardly along at something between a gallop and a walk, which does not look pretty, perhaps, but takes us over the ground at a good pace. Fatigue is forgotten, our aches no longer felt,

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hunger is all we feel, and food, food, our only thought. We run wherever the beach is level enough, wading through deep streams, heedless of the wetting, and rounding steep, almost sheer walls of cliff in a fraction of the time it would take us under ordinary circumstances.

I doubt if we in our then condition could have managed to crawl a mile on any other errand, but the prospect of finding the depot sustains us, and our pace, already swift, increases every time we near a jutting head of land.

Point after point we pass, with no sign of the depot, and after we have been searching for several hours, and ought by our reckoning to be there or thereabouts, the deadly fear of disappointment begins to make itself felt, acting, however, as a spur more sharp and forcible than even our desire. After another couple of hours, however, by which time we are ten miles or so from the tent, even this ceases to urge us forward, for it now seems certain that we must have passed the depot, which may be so well hidden that we have failed to notice it. We go more quietly now, at a pace more suited to our strength, for we must keep ourselves as fit as possible and go on until we find game. In vain we try to comfort ourselves with the hackneyed proverb that when things are at their worst, they mend; things are bad enough with us, heaven knows, but we have but little faith in their mending. For once, however, the old saw proves true; we turn up a covey of ptarmigan. Only one falls, the others are very shy, and fly off far inland, but we are well content as we continue our interrupted march, for we have at least one bird between us and starvation. It is encouraging to know that we have food with us, and that there is game on the island, but this little piece of good fortune is soon entirely overshadowed by the discovery of musk ox tracks which cannot be more than a few hours old. Now we know that we are safe—for the musk ox must be on the island, and cannot fly away. It is only a question of following up the

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spoor, and in a few hours—a day at the outside—we must come up with it—if we do not find the depot first. The track leads along the shore, in the same direction in which we are going, so we have now two things to look out for—the depot and the musk ox. We have our lunch with us, and our dinner is assured, one way or another; we march on, our eyes aglow with expectation. At last we have found the Eldorado we have longed for all through the summer. Had we but reached here a couple of months earlier, the long starvation trip would have been avoided, and some at least of our dogs saved. But we forbear to rail against the fate which checked our progress up there in the north—here at least we are sure of the means of keeping ourselves alive, and cheered by the thought of food, relieved from the horrid fear of death by starvation, we move off again as swiftly as before.

Suddenly I stop, shading my eyes—"What's that up there on the cliff? Looks like a case!"—And sure enough it is. A few minutes later, and we have reached our goal—the depot we have been talking of ever since we left Mallemuk Fjæld. The case looks all right—but—there should be five. We look about us—where are the others? And before opening the one, we make some sort of search around. Two broken cases, some empty tins and a few fragments of biscuit indicate that the contents of the rest have been used for dog-feed. But the disappointment is nothing beside the intense joy of finding the one case apparently unharmed.

The opening of that case was one of the most exciting moments I have ever had, for it has lain here for years, and the damp may have spoiled everything in the shape of bread or biscuits, but on knocking a hole and sniffing at the contents, the smell is in our opinion as fresh as in a bakery. This puts us more at our ease, and sure enough, on removing the lid, the whole appears as good as the day it was packed.

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We cannot help tasting a biscuit, just to make sure—and words cannot describe the joy of feeling one's teeth bite on good old hard tack once more. Hastily we build a bonfire with the fragments of old cases that are lying strewn around, and coffee is ready in no time. A few minutes later and we are feasting on pea-soup, a little burnt perhaps, but there is plenty of pepper, and to finish up with a big tin of cocoa, with biscuits and butter; never was served a more delicious meal. Indeed, it is horrible in a way to see how overjoyed we are over the food, we count the biscuits carefully, one by one, eat a flake of dried apple, and rub our hands at the thought of the stewed apricots; reckon out how many dishes of porridge we can get out of two pounds of oatmeal—twenty at least—and plant the tins in a row to feast our eyes upon them as we sit. It is a sight for the gods, we cannot tear ourselves away, and as we lie there by the depot, we feel amply repaid for all the hardship of the last long months.

Now at last we feel sure of being able to complete the long and toilsome journey home—it is not far now to the northern depot, and there are no less than four more depots between there and Danmarks Havn. Our troubles are over now—the rest of the trip cannot be so difficult, for the frost must soon be here, and then the ice will be safer, and the going better, while for the present we have food enough to last us for a good rest here, until we have got back our strength for the last stage of the journey.

A fine rain comes down, threatening now and then to put out our fire, but we do not mind; the rain means summer, and reminds us of Denmark, of home, and all those who think of us there. By now, alas, they know that we have not been able to get back in time. It is long since we have been able to talk of anything but food, and now that our hunger is for the moment appeased, it is quite a relief to talk of something else. The rest of the journey does not

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trouble us much, nor the coming winter—we pass over the next ten months, and speak of something which we have not dared to think of for a long time now, the joy of reaching home again. They are happy hours we spend on the little rocky knoll with the well-filled tins placed round us like a fairy ring to keep away the evil spirits of hunger and despair. But we must get back to the tent, where we can rest and sleep and cook a proper meal, and, hard as it is to tear ourselves away, we must pack up and get ready for a six or seven hours' march back to camp. With a cake of chocolate in our pockets in case we should feel hungry on the way, and the rest of the provisions—with the exception of the pemmican—on our backs, we start off, and reach the tent with our new-found treasure. But we are utterly exhausted by the time we get there, and only the knowledge of our precious burden makes it possible for us to cover the last mile or so—for we have been on our feet for thirty-two hours.

And now begins a period of pure delight, commencing with Iversen's birthday, which is celebrated with a whole series of little feasts. Next day I go off hunting, but without seeing anything but a lot of fresh musk ox tracks. Here, however, I make the unpleasant discovery that my skin is peeling off all over my body—probably the result of a slight attack of poisoning brought on by eating dog's liver. It is nothing serious, but it is far from pleasant all the same, to go about with one's skin hanging in strips. Iversen is in like case, but this does not prevent him from going off with his gun next day, without, however, bringing back anything for the larder. But we are in no immediate need of meat as yet—and this is probably the reason why we do not get any, for there is game enough on the island, as the tracks show, and if we had nothing else to eat we should doubtless manage to shoot something. We are neither of us very energetic, and although we stay out for ten hours or so

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at a time, we do not get over the ground in anything like the same way as before, and I at least find it necessary to sit down and rest every now and then. Iversen is not particularly keen on going out either, after coming home with big sores all over his body, and we agree that the best thing we can do is to lie still, and eat and sleep and rest for a while.

Each day of idleness, however, reduces our stock of provisions by fully four pounds. It is not very much, it is true, but we have been on short rations now for so long, that we find it quite enough, at any rate for the first few days. After a while we begin to increase the quantity, for there is not so much nourishment in boiled meat, lobscouse and cabbage as there is in pemmican, but it has more or less sufficed to give us back our strength, and we have now the pemmican left for the sledge trip.

Moreover, we have further increased our stock of provisions, which is more than we really deserve, for there is no denying the fact that we have been somewhat slack in our efforts to find game. This makes it all the more pleasant, however, to hear ptarmigan up in the hills, just as the sledge is packed, and all clear to leave the camp where we have spent such a happy time. It costs us an hour's delay, but five ptarmigan are well worth it, and delighted at the unexpected booty we start off, camping some six hours later at the depot. Once more we search the place thoroughly, after which we bid farewell to this our Fortunate Isle, and set our course across the inland ice towards the northern depot.

The ice is changed beyond all recognition. All the innumerable little streams which flowed over it before are now dried up, the pools are frozen over, and can bear both ourselves and our sledge, while on the surface of the deeper rivers we can drive as easily as on a level road. These rivers were the plague of our life before, being so difficult to cross; now, however, we follow them wherever we can, and are delighted at being able to drive over the smooth young

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ice. Even the surface of the inland ice, which on our arrival at Schnauder's Island was dull and wet, is now covered with innumerable sparkling ice crystals, and the sledge runs twice as easily as before. Add to this the fact that instead of dog's flesh we have now a breakfast of a quarter of a pound of pemmican, five ounces of peas, half a ptarmigan and half a biscuit, to commence work on, with the prospect of a similar meal at the end of the day; that we are both much stronger and have no pain anywhere save the discomfort of our continually peeling skin, and finally that we can sledge along for eight hours without once getting wet; and it is not surprising that we find all things changed, and life once more worth living.

We look round again at the surrounding country, and although we have seen it many times before—when we were hungry—it seems now to have undergone the same transformation as everything else. It is in truth a splendid panorama, especially in the early morning, when the sun is just up, and throws its warm red glow over the great hills about the Pic de Gerlache.

All is beautiful around us, and our hopes are bright as we take our places on the sledge, with a nod of friendly recognition to the high, queer-looking mountain top, and the sharp, rugged peaks which rise above the greyish white of the surrounding ice. It looks like a half-finished picture by a master's hand, lacking only the last sure strokes to make it stand out in all its splendour—for the bold outlines are half veiled as yet, seeming to melt into the dull blue of the background; the dark cliffs are distinctly lined, but flat, and the curled waves of snow scattered around seem built of straight lines. The whole lacks depth—perspective—or whatever a painter would call it: the untrained eye of an ordinary mortal can only see that it would be splendid beyond words if but some touch, some quality unknown were added.

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And now it comes, the final touch, the one thing needful—the light of the sun. The greyish crests of mingled ice and snow are golden now and splendid; each little hillock, every tiny fissure in the vast expanse of white, shows clearly now where all was vague and lifeless but a moment gone; the sun's rays move like a magic brush over the surface of the picture, lining and colouring every detail. Great cliffs grow red that were but neutral dark, and sharp-flung shadows mark each cleft and crevice; the whole moves up and falls into its place and due proportion, freed now from the veil of mist that made it one with the vague sky beyond. The picture one before imagined dimly stands out, but clearer and more beautiful than one dreamed.

The inland ice, which was but a grey wall against the western horizon, is flushed now in the rays of the still rising sun; the surface clears, and the line extends to westward as far as eye can see, and following the sun to the north, one's glance pauses to rest upon the dark, sharp contours of Lambert's Land. All along the eastern horizon there are islands, some so near that we can see each stone, each little billow of snow, others so far away as almost to melt and fade into the blue of the sky, but all rugged and dark, for the sun is up, and everything is shadowed there. Close at hand there is light enough, the first rays have lit the innumerable crystals of the ice, that flash and flame all round us welcoming, as we, the blood-red disc. Most things lose in value by uninterrupted possession; we were sick of the sun when it was always with us, but now that it disappears for some few hours, we greet it every day with joy, and halt for a while to watch the splendid transformation of its rising.

But we must be moving—and soon we are on our way southward once more, now over long stretches of good level ice, and often over the glassy surface of great frozen lakes, where the sledge glides without effort. Sometimes we haul

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for hours along the bottom of one of the many watercourses; these are for the most part anything but straight, so that we move now south-east, now south-west, but nearly always good going. It is a treat to sledge along these river beds, which but a fortnight ago would have been inaccessible. But it is not all plain sailing, and as we approach the islands where the northern depot lies, the going becomes worse, all the river-beds—and these are many—lie right across our course, and it is up and down, down and up, the whole day long. However, taken on the whole, we have nothing to complain of as regards the ice, but our strength is beginning to fail again, for the feeding up at Schnauder's Island cannot keep us going for ever, and our present daily ration is by no means large, or even sufficient; apart from the fact that we were already weakened by hunger. Looking at it all around, however, things are so much brighter than they have been for a long time, that we can afford to take such little obstacles as watercourses with stoic fortitude, as is only fitting on a sledge trip, and we are in high spirits when, on the 4th of September, we leave our sledge, and with it hearth and home, among some enormous pressure ridges on the inland ice a couple of miles from the depot, and start off to find and bring it back. As we are not exactly in a position to boast of our luck as hunters, we take no gun with us this time, but when we discover the fresh tracks of a bear close in to land, apparently bound in the same direction, we do not quite relish the situation. We hope, however, that the bear will recognise our peaceful intent and refrain from hostilities; we on our part are scarcely likely to take the offensive, having nothing but our knives. The first thing we encounter on reaching the land is naturally a flock of ptarmigan; that was only to be expected—now that we are unarmed the game swarms over ice and land. We swallow our annoyance, however, as best we can, and content ourselves with scowling at the birds. On second thoughts, recollecting that these at

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any rate cannot hurt us, however gunless we may be, we begin throwing stones at them—very naturally without result. Our disappointment is soon forgotten, however, on reaching the site of the depot shortly after. It is quite cheering to walk about and see so many signs of former human habitation; here, however, there are almost too many, extending, at any rate, over too great an area, for we have no idea where the depot itself is hidden, and well hidden it must be, for in spite of our keen scent for anything in the shape of food, we traverse the site from end to end several times without discovering the provisions. At last, however, I stumble upon it—hidden under a big rock, and immediately begin shouting for Iversen. We still observe a childish rule about not opening provision cases until both are present, that the pleasure of discovery may be equally shared.

Iversen hurries up at full speed, and when the treasures are exposed to view, we see to our delight that the contents are not entirely spoiled, in spite of the fact that the case has been lying open for three years. The oatmeal can still be used, and some of the biscuits, although green with mildew, are yet declared eatable. The flavour of the chocolate reminds one faintly of soft soap, but we are not dainty, and as all the tinned meats are good, we are more than delighted with our find.

We have now provision for eight days, and the next depot is not more than sixteen miles away, so there is no reason to stint ourselves; why should we not continue the luxurious living we commenced at Schnauder's Island? A big fire of broken packing-cases is soon blazing merrily, and we sit about it in delighted expectation—for we can now increase our rations to a pound a day, and from the next depot onwards we can eat as much as we like—if we find it, that is. But for the present no doubts as to this trouble our minds. We have found all the depots there were to find as yet, and even though the contents have not

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always been in first-class condition, the food was yet, as the shiphandler said, "quite good enough for sailors." And never were two sailor-men more modest in their demands than we; to-night we are more than content with the prospect of an easy march by comfortable stages from depot to depot, until we reach the house at Danmarks Havn. But midnight picnics in the open, with ten degrees of cold, are apt to break up earlier than anticipated, and soon we are on our way back to the tent, which we reach at ten o'clock in the morning, with all our provisions, but without having encountered the wandering bear.

Then southward again with our faithful sledge, up and down over the inland ice, where now deep valleys lie across our course, with sides so steep that we can scarcely pass them. But this sort of going cannot last for ever, it must end some time, if not to-day then, perhaps, to-morrow, and there is no hurry after all. Indeed, we are rather too early, for the young sea ice must be somewhat thin as yet. And we have plenty of provisions—which is all we care about at present: whether we reach Danmarks Havn a week sooner or later is of no importance: we have been out for six months already. So we take it easily, sledging as long as we can without fatiguing ourselves, even making a long halt for lunch, which consists of a slice of brawn and half of a rye biscuit. Truly, this life, as the gentleman in Shakespeare puts it, "is most jolly." The weather is fine and fairly cold, the outer slopes of the inland ice grow more and more level, and we edge gently out on to the sea ice, where the ponds from last summer's thaw are now frozen hard enough to bear, while the salt water ice which covers the broad lanes is nearly a foot thick, and smooth as glass. Sledging is pure delight under such conditions, and we are rapidly nearing the next depot, where a new supply of provisions awaits us; this is at last the paradise we have dreamed of all through the summer.

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There was a serpent though, in paradise, and so in every paradise on earth a serpent that, sooner or later, will steal forth, bringing doubt and despair where all was joy before. And ours is no exception to the rule; only too soon we find ourselves turned forth once more to battle for our lives with no support save our own fierce desire to live.

For the next depot is—nowhere. Gone, vanished—used for dog-feed. We have already marched as far as we thought to go to-day, but when we fixed the length of our day's journey we were still in paradise, and never dreamed of any serpent. But now all is changed, the empty tins grin devilishly at us out of wide gashes cut by the axe—we must get on at once, for, in our certainty of finding food here, we have made deep inroads on our stock. It was but a pound a day in all—but it was yet too much; the depot here laid waste speaks ill for what may await us at the next.

It is stern work now: a feverish race with death—the grim death of hunger, and we wonder often as we toil along which is to win in the end. The chances are all against us; our own carelessness in the matter of provisions has given hunger a dangerously long start, for we have over a hundred miles yet to go, and only eight pounds of food in all. The slightest obstacle can trip us up. A rude awakening, indeed, and that on the very spot where we had thought to laugh aloud in triumph.

But we keep our thoughts to ourselves, there is no time for idle talk—onward, to see what the next stage may bring. Gradually, as we near the outer coast, the old ice which has withstood the heat of summer disappears, giving way to thin young ice. It is treacherous going, and a storm or a strong current can break all up and send it out to sea, but as long as it holds, we must make use of it, for every mile counts now. We hurry forward as best we can, I going on ahead with the spear to test the ice, and Iversen following with the sledge. It is perilously thin, a couple of inches, no

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more; I can feel it give as I drive the ice-spear down, and, looking back, I can see how it bends under the weight of the sledge. Forward we must, however; we dare not stop for anything but open water, and, as long as the ice will bear us, content with cracking under our feet, we must be thankful that it holds. We cover twenty miles that day, and when at last the darkness stops our further progress, we camp on the sea ice, on something that looks like an old floe, which we are fortunate enough to discover between the outer rocks and the eastern end of Orleans Island.

A fresh breeze springs up during the night, and, putting an ear to the ice, we can hear it groaning and sighing all around, but the morning finds us still in the same place, and thankful not to be drifting out to sea among broken ice.

But it is high time to make for the land, there is open water ahead, and open water to the eastward, we must get up on the high ground to get a look out to the southward, where the depot should lie. We are obliged to leave the tent and sledge out on the ice, which is now much more dangerous than we thought the night before, for just outside the tent I put my foot right through the ice which we had imagined was an old floe, and, breathing a silent prayer that we may find our gear again when we return, we step out on to the young ice, not daring to trust it with the weight of the sledge until we have tested it in towards the land.

Slowly, foot by foot, we move off, roped together, feeling our way cautiously with the ice-spear; the ice is thin, and the sight of open water close on our left hand makes it still more uncomfortable, especially when a curious seal sticks up its head through the ice close by to see what it is that creeps so carefully along. But fortune favours us thus far at least: we reach the land at length, and then—then the last frail shelter of hope which we have sought to hold since yesterday, falls with a crash about our ears;—from where we stand, high up among the rocks, there is but water to be

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seen, open water as far as eye can see. And eighty miles to Danmarks Havn and—direst thought of all—we have but three pounds of food.

But the depot—we had almost forgotten it, in our anxiety to see what lay before us to the south. It may not be so bad after all, there should be a full case here, and there is no reason why this also should have been broken into because the last was. There is still hope, and once more we build frail castles in the air—not splendid now, but just enough to stand between us and death.

With hearts full of anxious doubt, we commence our search. It is soon over. The depot is there—or has been. It is empty.

CHAPTER XII

THE END

On again—A lost meal—More disappointment—A hard time—
On the rocks—Leave our gear—A dangerous crossing—Empty
cases—Hallucinations—Find food at last—The last stage—
Danmarks Havn.

WE have left the sledge behind, and with it tent, sleeping bags, everything that tends to make life bearable. It was impossible to take it any farther, for there is open water along the coast, and as far out to sea as we can see. We spent last night more or less comfortably, having brought with us part of a sleeping bag, just enough to cover our legs up to the knee; but we cannot carry it, and so our sleeping bags, together with a lot of things which we had imagined to be absolutely indispensable, are now left behind at a depot. It is astonishing how few the real necessities of life appear when every ounce has to be carried, and when two and a half months of continual starvation have exhausted one's strength. We have only one rifle, petroleum for about five meals, two and a half pounds of provision, with our diaries and films, and a pair of stockings each, but, little as it is, it weighs like lead upon our shoulders. All day we are obliged to stick to the land, as there is no ice along the coast, and even from a considerable height none is to be seen, either to the east or to the south. There is not even young ice on the water, nothing but a few slushy sheets borne down on the current, and moving about as fast as we can walk.

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Much against our will, we are forced to follow the coast-line with all its irregularities, and the road is anything but good. Here and there we come across fairly level grassy plains, frozen now, and dead, but first-rate going in comparison with the greater part of the coast, where we have to pick our way carefully between big rocks. Even more difficulty is experienced in passing a couple of local glaciers, which are so steep and slippery that we can find no foothold, and are obliged to climb several hundred feet up the cliffs to get round them.

The day—which begins at six o'clock—passes without anything of interest, only monotonous toiling along. We do not say much, and what we have to say is of food, food in any shape or form, and still we hope, as only starving men can, that something may happen, that we may find game, and put an end to this endless hunger. We trudge along, each occupied with his own dismal thoughts, when suddenly I stop. Out on the foreshore, not a couple of hundred feet away, is a bear, staring at us with wondering eyes. It has raised itself up with hind legs to get a better view, and seems now to be measuring us as though to see which is the stronger. Before it has had time to decide, however, Iversen settles the matter with a bullet, hitting the beast above the middle. Mortally wounded, it makes for the water, and swims off, gasping with pain, away from the fatal spot. Bullet after bullet whistles across the water, but the bear swims steadily on, and is soon out of range. Then its strength begins to fail, and the poor beast in its death-agony presents a spectacle of intense interest to an inquisitive seal, which swims in ever-narrowing circles round and round the dying lord of the ice, now ahead, now behind and close up to the bear, while its big, stupid eyes stare in astonishment at the remarkable manœuvres now being executed by its deadly foe, and marvelling, no doubt, at its own immunity from attack. Poor Bruin, he has no thought for seal, ten minutes

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after we have sighted him he is dead. And poor we—for it dies some 500 metres from land, and is carried farther and farther out to sea, while we stand staring at it with hungry eyes, unable to reach it. We find the sorry remains of a seal, which the bear had almost eaten when we arrived on the scene, and are sorely tempted to continue the interrupted feast, but still, hungry as we are, we cannot bring ourselves to eat its leavings—not yet. There is not much any way, a flipper and some fragments of skin and blubber, with part of the head. Hungrier than ever at the thought of the food which has escaped us, and more than ever discouraged, we continue our way along the coast.

We reach the depot a little to the south of Cape Amelie, where there should also have been a case of provisions, but this has gone the same way as the others. Taught by sad experience at the last two depots, we had not expected to find anything here, but some shadow of hope had yet remained, enough, at any rate, to make the finding of the empty case a disappointment. It is hard, indeed, when one is starving, to find a stock of good provisions used mainly to feed dogs, but there is nothing to be done, and after swallowing a few mouthfuls of pemmican, we climb up the cliff to look at the ice which lies in towards the land a little way ahead, and lie down to sleep, and soon forget our disappointment in the deep oblivion that follows on a hard day's work.

The night is anything but pleasant, however; it is cold, about fifteen degrees, and we are thinly clad in our worn canvas trousers—too thinly clad for comfort when lying out in the open, on the frozen earth, without sleeping bags or any other covering, and we are glad when morning comes, and we can start off once more.

Even this comfort, however, is but shortlived. For the first few hours all goes well, the coast is fairly level, with no great obstacle save here and there a dried-up watercourse

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with steep, crumbling banks. But, on reaching the spot where we had reckoned on being able to cross the fiord on the ice, we find still nothing but open water, and are forced to continue along the coast to the north-west, with every prospect of being obliged to march all round the bay, unless the ice comes closer in to land on ahead. The flat shore also ceases now, giving place to steep cliffs, rising almost sheer from the water, where the only means of progress is by creeping painfully along the rugged foot, composed of loose fragments of rocks, which has formed at the base. It is cruel work. We stumble continually, bruising our shins and twisting our ankles, and even then make but slow progress, for even the foot is so steep that it is only by the exercise of the greatest caution that we avoid falling in the water. We jump from rock to rock, or creep along on all fours, at times hanging on desperately with our hands, while our feet seek blindly for some hold on the unstable rocks beneath. Now and again a stone gives way beneath our weight, and falls, tearing others with it, while those above slip down as soon as the support below them is removed. It is a dangerous business, and we are in constant fear of getting crushed between these fragments of rocks, or falling with such ill effect as to make further progress impossible. What such an accident would mean, situated as we are, is only too clear, and we move forward with redoubled caution, while the ever-increasing weight of our pack becomes more and more insupportable.

It is an arduous day, one of the worst I have ever been through in the Arctic, and after having followed a raven and a hare without any result save an hour's fruitless toil, we are close on despair. But it is vain to listen to the promptings of our darker thoughts; we have gone too far now to turn back. Either we reach Danmarks Havn or—die of hunger. We pull ourselves together as well as we can, and continue our painful crawl along the foot of the cliff.

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At last, at three o'clock in the afternoon, after seven hours' incessant toil, we come to the end of the precipitous wall, which is scarcely more than three miles long after all, and reach a fairly good foreshore, which gives considerably easier going. This cheers us up a little, and still more encouraging is the sight of ice reaching right in to land some distance ahead—if only we can get out on to the unbroken winter ice, we need no longer follow the coast and can save many a weary mile.

We have still some way to go along the coast, however, and hour after hour passes without our reaching the ice, which seems to retire as we advance. Moreover, it looks as though the weather also, which has been fair so long, is now about to fail us, just when we need it most; dark, ragged clouds are beginning to bank up above the mountains to the north, threatening storm. It is still calm as yet, however, but threatening. Suddenly a gust of wind comes tearing down over the hills, shrieking among the rocks, and almost taking our breath away, to pass and disappear with a roar to the southward, along the steep wall of the coast. Another follows, and now they come in quick succession, until there is no pause between, and in half-an-hour it is blowing hard and steadily, right in our faces. Torn clouds of most fantastic shape race across the sky, ever faster and more numerous, and the heavy, leaden-coloured bank rises dark and threatening in the north. The surrounding peaks are hidden in great masses of cloud, and all about us the land is veiled, snow begins to fall, and one sharp shower follows another. Within an hour of the first gust the storm is in full blast, the sea gets up, and very soon the breakers are dashing on the coast, while now and then a long, deep, sigh, heard through the howling of the tempest, tells that the ice is breaking up: the ice which should have borne us over to the other side. The force of wind and sea combined are too much for it, and great sheets of young ice come

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floating down before the wind, torn from the solid mass beyond.

Bending forwards against the wind, we fight our way on, and at last reach a point where heavy masses of crushed-up young ice have formed a bridge between the unbroken winter ice and land. But it is too late now, we dare not venture out in such a gale on the frail covering, which is already bending before the wind and splitting in all directions.

While I am examining the ice, Iversen has the good fortune to catch sight of four ptarmigan, and succeeds in bringing them down, and finding a steep slope a little farther on, which affords some shelter against the wind, we spread out our fragments of canvas over our sticks, and prepare to spend the night as best we can. It is a miserable time, the wind blows in on us, our underclothes are damp and clammy with sweat from the hard day's work, and though we creep as close as possible for warmth, we shiver all over with the cold.

The gale increases during the night, the driving snow makes it impossible to see, and we dare not venture out on the thin sheet that separates us from the solid ice; there is nothing for it but to lie where we are all day. The state of our feet also makes this advisable; for they are so aching and swollen, that we can scarcely stand, and we hope that a day's rest may do them good. But it is no pleasant rest, that day. It is frightfully cold, and we are as usual hungry, but we dare not eat more than one meal, for the storm may last a couple of days yet. We pass the time as well as we can in deep and earnest discussion of the food question, our legs going all the time like drumsticks in our vain attempts to hammer some warmth into them.

All night and day we lie listening to the roar of the wind, which continues with undiminished force until well

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on towards morning, when it begins to subside, to our great relief, for we are by no means anxious to spend yet another day under such conditions, cold and without food. For now more than ever we are obliged to strictly enforce the principle, no work, no food. Hastily we pack, make our way across the thin bridge, and a few minutes later we are standing on solid ice.

The wind is with us now, tearing at our packs and pressing us forward as though to urge us on. Easily and without effort we glide over the level surface, glad to find ourselves at last on solid ice which—as we imagine—reaches right across to the other side.

Most men agree that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Up here life would be unendurable if one did not go a step further, and let the evil of each hour—each minute—suffice. One must be thankful for good progress and such other of fortune's favours as may fall to one's lot—Heaven knows they are not over many—without thinking too much of what may lurk behind the nearest slope. One learns to sternly repress all thoughts of even the immediate future, to live in the moment, glad if that moment be at all bearable, and to find the tiniest scrap of consolation where circumstances seem in league against one.

“Even the bastard good of intermittent ease,
How greatly doth it please!”

Only thus can such existence be made endurable, only thus can one find food of hope and comfort to keep one's soul alive in strength and courage, and close one's ears to the voices of doubt and dark despair which are the ever-present undertone of all.

The ice is good, and we are getting along famously; it looks as though it were going to last, and we are already beginning to talk of Danmarks Havn, as though it were quite near. For five hours all goes well, but then it seems

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that we have had enough of kindly fortune for a time, and troubles begin again.

There is a suspicious line ahead of us, a darkly shining streak across the whiteness of the ice. It grows broader as we approach, and soon there is no longer any possibility of doubt—it is open water. We try going farther up the fiord in order to get round it, but here also our progress is barred by broad lanes recently opened in the ice, and we turn outwards again towards the rocks, for the young ice here is only a few inches thick. And now the wind is rising again, and soon it is blowing a gale once more. Gust after gust tears down across the ice, whirling clouds of snow before it, and time after time we are caught and flung over bodily on the slippery surface. The sky is violently threatening, the snow commences to fall, we are surrounded on all sides by open water, and all around the ice is splitting under the increasing violence of the gale. At last we reach some rocks, only a few hundred paces from the open water, which is thrashed into spray by the furious gusts of wind, while the thin young ice bends up and down in waves, under pressure of the swell that rolls in upon it from the great stretch of open water to the eastward.

From the top of the rocks we can see out over the ice, now fast breaking up. From the north-west, by the west and far away to the south it is split up by innumerable cracks, some but a yard or so wide, others thirty feet or more across. South-south-east, however, along the edge of the open water, is what looks like a bridge across a wide lane, and on the other side of this the ice, as far as we can see, stretches away unbroken right in to land. After some consideration we decide to make the attempt, but we have not gone far over the swaying ice, which gets thinner and thinner as we approach the crack and begins to bend threateningly under our weight, before I recognise that it is risky, more especially as it is now blowing so hard that we can expect

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the young ice to break up under our feet at any moment and carry us out to sea. Cursing our ill-luck, we return to the rocks to wait for a more favourable chance.

Up to now we have always had petroleum, but now even that is used up. We have just enough to melt a mug of water, but the pemmican we are obliged to eat raw. For forty hours we remain on the rocks, waiting for the wind to drop and the weather to clear up.

All this time we keep a look-out over the ice, which apparently holds, and, as some loose fragments have drifted in beyond the edge of the solid ice, extends farther than before. All day the storm rages, and still the ice is swaying in long waves with the swell; it is hopeless to try to start as yet. At last, however, the gale subsides, and we decide to make a move. It is life or death now; we have only half a pound of pemmican left, and may as well drown as die of starvation. After a preliminary examination we agree that the ice is not strong enough to bear us with all our gear, so we leave our diaries and things behind, packing all up in a bit of canvas and piling stones on top, after which we start out, carrying nothing but a shot-gun and a handful of cartridges, a pair of stockings, etc.—nothing but what is absolutely necessary. After several fruitless attempts to cross the open lane—which is some fifty yards wide—we finally reach a place where there are a lot of loose bits of ice floating about. By poling ourselves a little way on these and springing from one to the other of the thin, swaying sheets, we reach solid ice at last. But it is break-neck work from beginning to end, and we take the maddest risks—springing desperately where no sane man, save in the direst need, would dare to tread. Even then caution is necessary, for the broken ice has frozen together again, thick and thin sheets now alternating all along, and it is impossible to judge the thickness with the eye: we must test every foot of the way with the ice-spear. Carefully, and with all

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our senses on the alert for ever-present danger, we go forward, walking some ten yards apart, roped together, Iversen watching my feet all the time to see if the ice shows signs of giving way, while I send the spear through the ice at every step. Everywhere it is so thin that the point goes through with ease. A number of smaller cracks radiate in all directions out from the broad lane, and at first we take great care in negotiating these. But as we go on, familiarity breeds contempt of danger, and having progressed for some time without mishap, we begin to feel more confidence in the great smooth surface, which reaches, as far as we can see, right across to the southern side of the bay.

But the distance is greater than we had imagined, and for hour after hour we move along the slippery ice, our fears subsiding as we advance. As long as there are no cracks in our course, as long as one footstep echoes the sound of the last, we move half unconsciously, seeing and hearing everything as in a dream. The whole thing seems but a vague play with which we ourselves are in no way concerned—until some little sign of change appears, a crack ahead, a duller sound beneath our feet. Then we are all awake in a moment, listening, staring until the danger is past, when we sink back once more into the same half trance of strange aloofness, through which the monotonous beat of our mechanically treading feet shapes itself into words, meaningless words, repeated many times, unconsciously, like some importunate half-learned lesson, hammering through the pulse of a drowsy brain. Some faint vestige of conscious personality makes us vaguely fear this growing apathy, but it is impossible to shake it off. We are too far away to speak, the endless expanse of white hypnotises our senses, and it is with a feeling of relief that we reach some badly broken ice close in to land, where the many cracks crave keenest wakefulness.

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We reach land about noon, after seven hours on the young ice, and eat the last of our pemmican. There is not much of it, only some twenty-five ounces, and we had intended to save half till next day, but the flesh is weak, and soon the pemmican is no more. We lick our fingers greedily, and in spite of a certain inward void we feel ourselves the better. I am inclined to believe, however, that this is less the effect of the food than the consciousness of once more having firm ground beneath our feet, with no natural obstacle between us and Danmarks Havn, which nerves us to a last effort.

There is unbroken winter ice along the coast, which is much better going than the young ice, being safer, and giving better foothold. Everything now depends on our reaching the depot at Cape Marie Valdemar as quickly as possible. We are not quite sure as to where it lies, and hurry on therefore to reach it before dark. We walk as fast as we can, sometimes almost running. Strange, that our bitter experiences from the last three depots should not have taught us—but we have not yet given up all hope of finding at least a little food, and just as before, the nearer we get, the more confident we become that it cannot have been completely emptied. And so we run on, forgetting our tired and tender feet, thinking only of winning our race with the dark.

Seven o'clock—eight—the sun has gone down, the twilight fades to darkness, and still we have not reached the depot. The more distant land is blotted out from view, the stars shine steely clear in the frosty sky, across which are flung the pale green streamers of the aurora. It is full night by the time we find the depot—a single provision-case lying on the shore is the first sign of it we see.

It is remarkable how strongly the sight of such a case affects one's stomach. The perfectly justifiable claims of the inner man are asserted with painful distinctness. More

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cases appear, and we feel certain now that we have found food at last—there should be two full cases of provisions. Two whole cases—food for us both for five-and-twenty days; the thought of so much wealth is enough to make one giddy. But gradually the dismal truth discloses itself in haggard nakedness, and we recognise that also these are empty. Our hope dies down again, and the pangs of hunger grow more desperate; there is nothing but a heap of empty tins, licked clean by the dogs, and the last vestiges removed by two years' alternating frost and thaw. Silent, ravenous and despairing we find ourselves a sort of shelter among the rocks where I build a fire of broken cases to make tea, while Iversen searches the place once more, this time being fortunate enough to find three small tins of meat extract. This is at any rate a welcome addition to our store—we can make a meal of soup, and finish off with tea—our courage is renewed.

Then we stack our camp-fire for the night. The flames writhe upward in the cold air, flinging a warm glow over the dark rocks, and lighting myriad diamonds in the snow, the thin wood curls in the fierce heat and spits and crackles angrily, we fling new fuel into the red jaws of the monster, and the sparks fly far around, to fall and perish hissing in the snow. The smoke is carried every way by the faint breeze, mounting upwards for a little, and then borne over in our faces; we are half suffocated, but never dream of moving, for this is kindlier than the cold, and our stiff limbs, too, rebel. We cover our faces with our hands, coughing as the acrid smoke tears at our lungs, until a kindly puff of wind clears the air for a moment.

We move only to turn over on the other side—for lying beside a roaring fire, with half one's body baked and the other half shivering with cold, is not entirely comfortable after all. And so we pass the night, talking over dangers and difficulties past, and of the wonderful meals that wait

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us when we reach Danmarks Havn, endeavouring to quiet present pangs with soup and tea. But three little tins of extract of meat do not go far towards filling two starving bodies, and we are far from being satisfied.

We do not sleep, but it is a good night's rest all the same—the best we have had for a long time, and we feel ourselves the better for it when we start next day, the 17th of September, at two o'clock in the morning, on what we hope may prove the last stage of our long journey.

The day begins badly. Half-an-hour after we have left the depot, the old ice comes to an end, and we are forced to return to the land and make a wide detour round a fairly deep bay. It is still dark, and we have to pick our way carefully to avoid stumbling over the big rocks which are strewn everywhere about the shore. Considerable difficulty is also experienced in getting over a snow-hill, not very big, but steep, and very slippery, the heat of the summer and the subsequent frost having transformed its surface to ice. It is almost impossible to find foothold, and at every step we slip down towards the dark water which laps against its foot. It is not pleasant to look down, for a fall, which might happen to either of us at any moment, would send us headlong into the icy water, and bring our journey to a sudden end. For the last part of the way we are obliged to hack out holes in which to tread, but we get safely over at last, and as we come down on the other side, the first signs of day begin to appear. Soon the sun is up and we can see our way. It is a lovely morning, clear and still, but we have no time now to lose in admiration, and hurry on, our pace increasing with the growing light, for Danmarks Havn is still a long way off. Every two hours we make a short halt, and pleasant it is to lie on our backs and stretch our limbs. The rest is somewhat spoiled, however, by the thought of the uncomfortable quarter of an hour that awaits us when we start, for it takes some time to get our stiffened

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muscles into working order again. Our feet especially are very painful, the ankles being swollen and horribly tender, as a result of continually getting twisted among the rocks.

As soon as we are fairly started, however, it is not so bad. The pangs of hunger are worse, increasing every minute, and causing us physical pain. For my own part, I can think of nothing but food. At first my thoughts dwell with fond recollection upon all sorts of dishes, but gradually they concentrate themselves upon sandwiches—Danish sandwiches, with no top slice, very different from the dull, dry things one gets in England. Otherwise I have for the last few days dreamed chiefly of enormous juicy steaks, as the most desirable of all human delight, but to-day it is sandwiches. Why I do not know, but so it is. In particular my fancy turns upon the many packets of delicious food which I have seen given away to beggars, and I grow quite furious at the thought of the contempt with which these gentlemen too often regard such gifts; treasures that I would give years of my life to buy. I remember the neat little packets of sandwiches from my school-days, and gradually the thought takes possession of me to such a degree that at last I imagine that I am walking in the streets of Copenhagen, eagerly on the look-out for a packet of sandwiches. Suddenly I spy what I am seeking, a little white object lying a little to the right of me. I turn to pick it up before any one else can get it, but, as I stop, my foot strikes against a stone. The shock brings me back to stern reality, reminding me with painful distinctness that I am in Greenland, far away from Copenhagen and all its sandwiches. So great was the force of the hallucination, however, that I have actually turned out of my course, to Iversen's great astonishment, and at my foot lies a little white stone. I take it in my belt, and go on again, but the little packages still haunt me, and before long I catch myself running off

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once more after little white stones, quite certain this time that there is no mistake.

It soon becomes evident that Iversen is in no better case; I notice that he frequently stops, and turning round to see what is the matter, I find him peering through the field-glass at something on ahead, only to let it fall again with a shake of the head. Once or twice I ask what he is looking at, but the answer is always the same: he thought he had discovered a case of provisions, but it turned out to be a rock. At last I give up asking, it is too painful to talk about it, for I know well enough what his fancy sees.

According to our reckoning we ought to reach 17 Kilometer Næssel by about six in the evening, and we know from our autumn trip that some few tins of food are there. We keep a sharp look-out for the point, and sighting something about four o'clock which looks rather like it, we flatter ourselves that we must have been going faster than we thought, and that this must be the place.

For the first time to-day we find old ice close in to land and lose no time in getting down on it, glad of the change which it affords. Almost at the same time we catch sight of a bear with two cubs standing on a high hummock of ice and staring curiously at us, but the moment we stop, all three disappear behind a pressure ridge and are far away on thin ice before we can get our gun ready. It is useless to attempt to follow them, and we go on without losing more time, but the sight of the beasts had increased our hunger, which is already excited by the thought of being so near to food as we imagine ourselves to be.

Once more, however, we are doomed to disappointment. We pass many old camping-places, with any amount of tins lying about, but although we search long and carefully for any remains of food, we find nothing, and wearied and ever more hungry we continue our way. Iversen's legs are now so painful, that he forgets his hunger, but I am ravenous

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enough for two. Never in my life have I felt so exhausted and despairing as that evening, and the gathering darkness makes things even worse, for in the uncertain light, and seen from the landward side, every point we approach seems to us to be the one we seek. The semi-delirium of starvation aids the illusion, flinging us from the height of confident hope to the depths of disappointment and despair. Each time we near a point we redouble our efforts in our delight at having reached so far, and encouraged by the thought of food. But when we get close enough to see that it is not the place, the flickering flame of energy dies down, and we stagger sullenly along, with bowed heads, tortured by ever-increasing hunger, and with a hopeless, childish feeling of infinite bitterness and loneliness. There are traces of human beings everywhere—ancient remains of the Eskimo camps and some more recent relics of the Danmark Expedition—we search every spot where there seems even the wildest possibility of finding food, but nothing—nothing. We know only too well that no one ever leaves anything up here, but still we cannot pass a camping-place without turning over every tin, and examining every little stone that bears the faintest resemblance to a biscuit or a bit of dog-pemmican.

Point after point is reached and passed—all exactly alike, and all exactly like the one we seek. We have no longer any idea of our whereabouts, and it is indescribably uncanny to see, time after time, the same headland with the two small hillocks at its foot, the ghost of 17 Kilometer Næssel, continually tempting us forwards through the dark. We bruise our shins against the rocks, slip on the ice that covers the small streams, and twist our ankles on loose stones that fall away beneath our feet, as we stagger along in the darkness, now down on the shore, now farther up inland, half mad with hunger and exhaustion. By ten o'clock we give it up, and fling ourselves down on the cold ground under some rocks, creeping as close as possible for the sake of

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warmth. A few minutes later I am sound asleep, but Iversen's legs are so painful that he cannot sleep, and he feels the cold more in consequence. By midnight he cannot stand it any longer, but rouses me, and begs that we may go on, in spite of the dark. I am perfectly warm, and half asleep, and cannot make out why Iversen wants to start, or where he wants to go; I am very comfortable where I am. But he keeps on nudging me and talking about making a start, until at last I am fully awake. It is bitterly cold— 15° at least, and it is beginning to blow right in our faces now, for the wind has changed since we sought our shelter here. Never has the sky seemed colder than that night, or the innumerable stars so clear. Southwards, low down on the horizon, is the moon, its great disc red and dead and cold; the merciless wind hisses hauntingly among the rocks, and finds its way through our clothes to the shivering body beneath. It is a ghostly place, and yet I shudder at the thought of starting out in the dark, where we cannot see ten steps before us, and I am stiff all over, aching and weary in every limb. Iversen is in far worse case, however, the pain in his legs, together with hunger, cold and exhaustion, have worked upon his brain, until he is half out of his mind. He has but one thought, to start off, and repeats continually, "Come on, let's get away from here, only a little way, come on!" I don't quite like the idea of moving blindfold over such ground as this, but there is no help for it, he must have his way. With an effort I get on my feet, but should have fallen had not Iversen, who had already been on his feet for some time, caught hold of me, and hanging on to his arm I walk up and down for several minutes until I can stand alone.

With his aid I get my pack on to my shoulders—it weighs less than ten pounds—and off we go into the darkness, staggering unsteadily at first, and feeling our way with our sticks, then gradually quicker and more steadily, until we get down on to a strip of level, sandy beach.

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After a couple of hours' marching we sight the point of 17 Kilometer Næssæt at last, and this time it is no trick of the imagination. Soon after we come across some remains of an Eskimo camp : old relics of a long-forgotten time, when men still lived on this desolate coast, and it is not long before we discover the place where I saw the provision-cases last autumn. With feverish haste we ransack the pile of things left by the Danmark Expedition, finding almost immediately two tins of soup and a tin of peas. Soon a fire of broken cases is blazing merrily and I commence the cooking. We eat slowly, tasting each mouthful of the wonderful warm food ; one would scarcely believe that a little dish of soup and a mug of peas could have such marvellous effect on a worn-out system. We seem to feel new life poured into our veins, we are sound and strong once more, and our hunger almost appeased. It is delirious joy to sit once more by a blazing fire, so far freed from the pinch of starvation, that we can think of other things than food—food that has been our one thought now for many days. But this is but an armistice, the battle is not over yet, we dare not stay here long. We wait, however, till the sun is up, and all our fuel burned—then there is nothing for it but to start, however much against our will. Painfully, aching and stiff in every limb, we get on our feet, and commence our way across the land to Danmarks Havn.

It is weary work, this last stage of the journey ; but the food has given us some little strength, or at least relieved the actual pangs of hunger, and we have only the ceaseless aching in our legs to struggle with now. I manage pretty well, but Iversen is so weakened with pain that I am obliged to support him every now and then, and our progress is pitifully slow over the hilly ground. After five hours' painful trudging we reach the last range of hills, and there far down below us lies a little cluster of sheds—Danmarks Havn.

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At last the long and weary march is at an end, at last we sight the place it has taken us so many months of toil to reach, the place that we have talked and dreamed of for so many weary days. A little house, surrounded by small sheds—the homely comfort of the place goes to our hearts. We say but little, just sit there in silence, drinking in the picture of a little hut, reddish-brown in the warm sunlight, with green plains stretching away on every side, a sweet oasis in the icy desert, with food and warmth and kindly shelter. We move forward towards it, full of a great content, but staggering still at every step, dragging our feet like old men, and halting every now and again to rest. By eleven o'clock on the morning of the 18th of September we have reached it—the journey is at an end !

CHAPTER XIII

MORE DISAPPOINTMENTS

Peace and plenty—Northward again—Retreat—Leave Danmarks Havn—A difficult journey—A sad home-coming—Winter days—Christmas once more.

WE have reached our haven at last. We sit on the bench outside for some minutes in speechless content, then get on our stiff and aching legs once more, and begin to prepare a meal. We swallow a pound of chocolate each to take off the edge of our hunger—it doesn't seem to make much difference—while the porridge is boiling on the range, and the oil stove is doing its best to warm up a couple of pounds of tinned lobscouse. This is something like a meal—but we must be careful. At the hospitals they treat starvation cases with chicken broth—we had better stick to the lighter dishes. Now lobscouse and oatmeal porridge on top of a pound of chocolate can hardly be called light diet, but—well, let any one who likes to do so, make the attempt. Live on starvation rations for about three months, march close on a hundred miles on next to nothing at all, and then see how far prudent caution avails when one at last gets the chance of a full meal. I am inclined to fancy that most men would succumb to the temptation, however clearly reason may insist that one has to pay dearly for it afterwards.

We make a clean sweep of the eatables before mentioned, besides butter ad. lib., and finish up with half a pint of

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cocoa. Next day I lie writhing in my bunk, while Iversen reigns in solitary majesty at the table—a sight which does not tend to diminish my annoyance. He sits there, stuffing himself to his heart's content, until, to my something approaching joy, he stops suddenly with a sardine half way to his mouth, lays it down slowly, as if in thought, and dashes out of the cabin. He soon returns and scowls angrily at me, for I cannot refrain from smiling in spite of my pain—Iversen had boasted, with the pride that goeth before a fall, that nothing would upset *him*. It is his turn now—and next day I am up and about, feeding my sick comrade with modest doses of boiled milk and biscuits.

We get over it, however, as we have got over other and worse troubles, and three or four days after our arrival we are again able to eat as much as we like—which is saying a good deal.

Time goes on, the sun is lower and the days are shorter; we must soon be thinking of making a move, however much against our will, for there is much to be done before sledging becomes impossible—first northward again to fetch our diaries, and then home.

We rig up some sort of an outfit as best we can with the scanty materials at our disposal. A sledge, big and heavy, is put together, sleeping bags are repaired, tent looked to, and before September is out we are once more ready to start.

Last autumn was wild and stormy enough, but this year it is even worse. The gale is howling outside, the snow is whirled about in clouds, the ice is breaking up, while we sit cosily inside and look out of our window at the fading daylight, greatly content with life in general and immensely glad to find ourselves once more—on dry land, I was about to say. For we feel very much like shipwrecked men, who after a long, fierce struggle with storm and hardship and starvation at last set foot on a kindly coast.

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The toil and misery of the past months are not forgotten—but rather relegated to some vague background of memory, appearing now strangely distant and unreal, as it were some thrilling story we had read. We can scarcely realise that it is we ourselves who have been through it all, and in the comfort of our present surroundings the whole thing seems exaggerated—impossible. But every time we are called upon for any physical effort we are painfully reminded of our weakened condition, and our legs are still—a fortnight after our arrival—aching and stiff, especially Iversen's, which are so badly swollen below the knee that he is obliged to stay in his bunk for a couple of days. Save for mere weakness, however, we are soon perfectly fit, and our strength, too, gradually returns. We have nothing to do all day but eat and read and sleep—and talk of our companions. We have got it into our heads that they must still be here in Greenland, and every morning we say to each other, "Wonder if they'll come to-day?"—for we are also convinced that they will come up here in search of us. And so the gale does not trouble us in the least, it is only postponing the happy event; moreover, being forced to put off our own departure, it may be that we are saved the discomfort of making the journey alone. And so we sit all day staring out of the window; often we seem to see some one approaching, and rush out, but after a few minutes' anxious peering through the driving snow, we creep back to our shelter, shake ourselves, and take up our places by the window once more.

But it all helps to keep up our spirits, and gives us something to think and talk about, for this picture, the pleasantest we can find, furnishes material for much discussion.

Day after day goes by, and still they do not come. October has set in, the ice is still there, in spite of the storms which rage over sea and land with undiminished force. It is

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time we began to think of making a start, but we are very comfortable where we are, and lying out in a tent in this weather is not a cheerful prospect.

On the 15th of October the weather seems to show some signs of improving, but still our companions have not come. It has been blowing hard all the time, we comfort ourselves with the thought that they will turn up all right, and leave a message for them, saying where we have gone, and begging them under any circumstances to follow us up and overtake us on the way.

We make but slow progress on our northward trip. The sledge is heavy, the tent is heavy, everything is heavy—much heavier than it need be. But it is the best we have, there is nothing to be done but redouble our exertions, and we brace our feet against the ice, hauling and shoving as best we can. But all our efforts help us very little, the ice is salt, the snow is soft, and there are cracks about. High-pressure ridges bar our way, the wind is in our faces, and snow and storm combine against us, while our weakened state makes all difficulties more keenly felt. Altogether, it is not surprising that we make but poor progress, and creep exhausted into our ice-cold tent each evening, glad of the many hours of rest which the long night renders unavoidable.

For seven days we keep on our way northward—that is to say, it is seven days since we started, but two days we have been obliged to lie up on account of storm, and have only covered eighteen miles in all. Our provisions are not calculated to last for so long a journey as our present pace will mean, for at this rate it will take us thirty days to cover the distance there and back—and it took us three days to come down, marching without food.

There is nothing for it but to return empty-handed; we shall have to wait now until next spring, although this will make the trip about 200 miles longer, as we shall have to start from Shannon Island. But next spring is a long way

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off, and rather that than keep on as we are going, when it is impossible to carry out our purpose. And next spring we shall have our comrades with us—strange, that they have not already overtaken us.

We turn our faces homewards, the wind now at our backs, which makes a great deal of difference. The sky looks threatening, however, and speaks of snow to come. It comes, and with a vengeance, for the wind subsides, and the snow begins to fall quietly and thickly, adding inch by inch to the depth of the white mass, which is too soft to bear the slightest weight, and crushes to nothing under our feet, yet offering so great a resistance to the sledge that it is almost impossible to get along. Still the snow falls, and soon it is lying a foot deep; the sledge cuts its way like a snow-plough, leaving a broad, deep furrow in its wake. At last we decide to leave it where it is, and make our way over land, for as our fatigue increases we grow more and more certain that our comrades must by now be at Danmarks Havn. We have done our share; there is no sense in wearing ourselves out. And so we start off to make our way back as best we can, glad at the thought of seeing friendly faces once again.

These tricks of hope, these fancies of the brain so pleasant and so false—they have cheated us so many times before. And yet they serve a purpose; keeping up our spirits when a knowledge of the truth would be discouraging. On the 25th of October we reach Danmarks Havn once more after our unsuccessful trip, to find, as might be expected, no one there.

Well, we are here ourselves again; as a matter of fact we ought now to be on our way southwards, but we are not very energetic, and can always find some excuse for staying; either it is blowing a gale, or else it looks like snow.

The snowstorms are numerous and violent, but none so bad as the last of them. We cannot see five paces before us—or could not, if we tried, for we very naturally do not

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stir out—and the snow finds its way through every tiny crack and crevice into the house, piling up in great drifts by the door towards my bunk, for we dare not light the stove, lest the chimney should blow away. There is nothing for it but to sit there in full Arctic war-paint, glaring savagely at the growing snowdrifts, and keeping warm as best we can.

It cannot go on like this, however; the snow is filling the whole of the cabin, until at last only the bunks are clear. We creep into them, waiting for the storm to subside, but it keeps on all night with undiminished force. Next day the wind drops sufficiently to allow us to venture out—not through the door, however; we have to take the window out of its frame and get out that way.

Outside, a picture of desolation meets our eye. Two observation houses are blown down, the timbers carried a couple of hundred feet away, empty cases are lying about here and there, but the most imposing sight of all is a big petroleum tank, which the wind has playfully escorted far out on to the ice—and it weighs two hundred pounds !

But by the time we have finished clearing the snow away from the house, we are forced to admit that the storm has done some good after all; the loose snow is blown away, and this will help us considerably. We must soon be starting now. The sun is gone, and it is high time we got back to the ship, since our companions apparently are not coming up here to look for us.

On the 5th of November we start, and save for the days of storm which are unavoidable at this season of the year, all goes fairly well. The ice is by no means as bad as it might be, the only thing is that the surface is strangely salt. It looks as if the ice had been recently broken up, and we were now sledging over young ice. This is scarcely possible, for we are now well on into November, but there is no telling—and it was a good hard storm we had a few days ago.

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But in spite of the good going we do not get much out of our day's work, for after a few hours we are incredibly tired; our legs ache, and we are pitifully short of breath. Onward we must, however; we sit down a moment on the sledge to rest, cursing our weariness, and start off again, after a short breathing-space—for it is too cold to sit still for long. It is a far cry to Shannon Island, but it is the last stage of our journey; already we are approaching more well-trodden ground. We reach one of the depots which we had laid down in the spring; the food, however, interests us less than the prospect of finding a message from our companions. But there is not a word, not the slightest sign that the depot has ever been visited—by human beings, at any rate. Visited it has been, and to some purpose, by animals; of a whole sack of clothing we find but a few rags left. We console ourselves, however, with the thought that we shall soon be home now; meanwhile we sit by the cheery oil stove, enjoying the cigars which our companions had considerably packed among the provisions. We are beginning to feel that we are approaching civilisation.

We are rich now, as regards provisions—we have six days' food on the sledge. It proves, however, by no means too much, even for the short distance to the next depot, for the ice, which has been fairly good so far, now becomes almost impassable. It has been broken up quite recently, that is evident, and has frozen together again—which does not take long, with 30° of frost—but before it had time to get quite solid, it must have been subjected to enormous pressure, for great stretches have been literally splintered, crushed together and finally frozen to a whole, out of the mass of which sharp points of young ice stick out in all directions. It rings under us as we go, for the weight of the sledge smashes the splinters, which fall tinkling on the ice.

Time and again we are obliged to take the sledge forward in standing hauls, a tedious business, and most painful for

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our feet, for our footgear is anything but good—I made it myself—and we slip and stumble and hurt our ankles continually. I have never seen a stretch of ice so full of splinters.

And the dark comes down on us unexpectedly—a most uncomfortable darkness, for the sky is covered with thick clouds, and the vague shadowless twilight makes our progress still more difficult.

One consolation we have, however; it cannot be long before we reach Shannon Island, and then—we talk over all the splendid things that are to come—“then,”—encouraging ourselves to one more half-hour, and yet another effort, before the next halt; the short halts which are the only bright spots in the reality of the present.

We pass the Haystack—as usual in the teeth of wind and snow and other discomforts; we find the depot—only twelve miles more to Shannon Island. But there is a storm brewing, and we begin to fear that we may not reach land to-morrow after all: a fear which unfortunately proves but too well founded.

For one whole day it blows, and we endeavour to make the best of it. Two days—and we begin to grow impatient—three—will it never stop? Four days—and five—it blows, and we have no words to express our exasperation. We lie there in our wet sleeping bags, the petroleum is nearly gone and our provisions are rapidly disappearing—are we in for another starvation trip?

Shelter we have—of a sort. The patchwork tent we fixed up at Danmarks Havn is not very big—six feet by four of floor space, and two and a half feet high—and the air is so bad inside it that a light will scarcely burn. But it is warm enough, and there we lie, listening to the wind as it roars over the ice-fields and whines over the stretched tent-ropes; we talk of our winter quarters and our comrades on board the old *Alabama*. Soon the food question begins to



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MAKING OUR TENT



A CAMPING SITE

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crop up once more in our conversation; we are beginning to feel about the same as at the beginning of our last starvation trip. So near—and yet so far! For to go on in this weather is utterly impossible.

On the sixth day the wind drops a little, and we are able to make a start, but once more we are obliged to leave our tent and equipment behind and reduce our impedimenta to what we can carry on our backs. It would take us a couple of days at least to reach land with the sledge, and we have only a pound of pemmican left—and dog pemmican at that.

It is a risky business to make so long a trip without tent or sleeping bags, in the heart of winter—it is the 22nd of November—but it has to be done, and we take with us only a rifle, a spade, and the oil stove loaded for one meal. We shoulder our pack, and stagger off in the dark; it is as well that we have left our gear behind, for the ice is so rough that we can scarcely get along as it is; there are no shadows, everything is greyish-white and apparently level—until we suddenly fall into a hole or run slap into a wall of snow.

We swallow our impatience—refrain at any rate from all outward expression of it; we cannot afford to waste our breath with cursing, though it might be a relief; we need it all for the heavy work in hand.

The sky, which was fairly clear when we started, soon becomes overcast; even the little sickle of the moon is hidden. On we go, stumbling through the dark, until we both fall into a deep hole, and philosophically decide to stay there for the night. The spade is called into requisition, and we burrow away like Arctic moles—if such exist—until we have hollowed out a cave in the snow, just large enough to hold us both lying down.

We stuff our effects into the cave, creep in ourselves, stopping the opening with blocks of snow, and there we have a little house cosy and warm; but with defective ventilation,

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for the oil stove will not burn, and the candle goes out, so we are obliged to leave an opening.

After this the air is better, though decidedly colder, but the oil stove is humming cheerily, and the pemmican (dog-pemmican !) is soon cooked, when I discover that we have forgotten the salt. It is a nauseous meal, but we are hungry enough to swallow it, albeit with regretful memories of a dish of burnt pemmican which we were once so dainty as to despise.

We must try to get some sleep, for we have still far to go, and it is by no means certain that we shall find so good a shelter to-morrow night. Still—who knows ?—by that time we may be there. Despite our best intentions, however, we get but little sleep that night. Iversen, who is more warm-blooded, soon “melts through” and wakes me with his restless movements.

“Take the spade, and lie on that,” I growl out sleepily, and Iversen, delighted with the idea, fumbles about in the dark until he finds the spade and gets himself fixed up on the flat of it. Then all is quiet again, and I drop off once more, only to be roused again by Iversen, who explains between chattering teeth that the spade is “beastly hard and beastly cold.”

It is two o'clock now, and the worst of the darkness is over; we hug ourselves warm as well as we can, light up the lantern with our last candle, and with our packs on our backs we move off in the dark.

Luck is with us now, the ice improves, and the hard, level layer of snow makes first-rate going. By dawn we reach the land, and setting our course by a star, we hasten on, eager in hope to reach the wondrous end of our journey—home !

On we go over the flat, level land, until the light once more begins to fade, and we have not yet reached Frozen Bay. I am beginning to grow uneasy—a storm now would mean disaster. We dare not halt to rest, but hasten on—

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wards, steering E.S.E., which must bring us out to the water sooner or later.

At last, in the gathering twilight we sight a tidal crack. The coast is perfectly flat, and the boundary imperceptible, but tidal cracks are only found on sea ice, so we know more or less where we are, and hurry on as fast as our legs can carry us towards the steep promontory which looms up vaguely through the dark.

We slip on the smooth ice, and cannon against loose blocks; the second night has begun, and we have still some way to go. Suddenly we find ourselves in among some horribly rough and heavy ice, where we stumble blindly about, falling into deep holes, and fetching up at last against a steep wall of ice, which we begin to climb with no idea of its height, for it is quite dark now. After a deal of toilsome scrambling, however, finding ourselves apparently still as far as ever from the top, we give it up, and slide down again to make ourselves as comfortable as possible in the shelter of a hole. Above us towers a vague shape of blackest darkness, scarcely distinguishable from the dark sky, save by the millions of stars that pierce the Arctic night.

The darkness is but little discomfort to us as a rule, we have grown accustomed to it, and it is rarely we regret the heartiness with which we wished the sun well lost last summer. But to-night we are impatient, we have reached Shannon Island, and if only the moon would come, we could go on; in an hour the last stage would be ended, and we ourselves on board our ship once more, surrounded by our comrades.

Thus we dream, in happy ignorance; and all would be pure delight if we had but something to eat. Having nothing, however, we comfort ourselves with the thought that our appetite will be the better when we reach the world of comfort and plenty which is now so near. We use the last of our petroleum to melt some ice, and brew a

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steaming bowl of hot water—which, after all, is a sort of drink.

The oil stove throws a little circle of light around—melting a hole, so to speak, in the darkness—and we creep close to it, warming our frozen hands at the kindly flame, and talking cheerfully of pleasant days to come. That the *Alabama* is still here we have no longer any doubt, for we can see—or rather feel—that the ice around has not been broken up this summer.

A faint reddish glow tinges the darkness of the sky, the moon is rising in the east. This gives us light enough to see our way; we pack up our belongings, and in a few minutes we are on the move once more. Our progress is punctuated by slips and stumbles and not a few hard knocks, but little we care, our thoughts are on ahead, where shelter, warmth and home await us. At length we round the last point, and there before us lies the snowless land about our winter quarters—one more effort and we are there! Our weariness is forgotten, and with our eyes fixed on the spot we hurry on over the ice.

“A mast—a mast—look, Iver—there!” I clutch at his arm in a fever of excitement—we have expected to find our comrades all along, but now we are certain.

Iversen sees it too, and with a shout of joy we dash forward. . . . But what on earth . . . the mast is on dry land!

We stop and stare at each other—what can it mean? Oh, they’ve had to haul the ship up on the beach for fear of getting nipped—that’s all. Anyhow—they are there, and that’s all we care about at present, and we start off again faster than ever.

We reach the land. But what in heaven’s name does all this mean? Is that ice up there, or what? The stern of our ship high up on the shore! We run against it in the dark; there is the skylight—no—and to our consternation

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we discover that what we had imagined to be the ship is but a sort of canvas house. Our worst fears are realised—the *Alabama* has been crushed by the ice.

And our comrades? We stare about us in the dark—ah! there is something up there among the rocks: a house.

We reach it in a moment, with a joyous shout—but scarcely have the echoes died away before we realise that it is empty—snowed up and empty.

So happy and so confident we were, but a moment ago. And now—now we know that we are alone on this forsaken coast. So confident we were and now so utterly alone and helpless.

In silence we break open the door and enter the hut, or rather stand staring at the opening, for the place is full of snow, and the open doorway grins at us whitely through the dark. The spade that served us last night is taken out, and well repays us now the trouble of its weight. One hacks the snow into blocks, which the other carries out—it was not thus we fancied our home-coming.

We get the place clear at last, and discover that the tin roofing has been blown away, moon and stars shine in through the great gaps. We work away in silence—there is nothing to say. So sure we had been that we should find them here; but we are growing used to disappointment. We do not even curse—what use?—and we are tired—dead tired. We clear the snow from a couple of bunks, spread out a sleeping bag, creep in, and say good-night. There seems to be nothing more to say—the dreamlike unreality of it all makes a strange impossibility of speech.

That was on the 25th of November. Next day, instead of sitting idle among our comrades, hearing and telling as we had imagined, we set to work at once. The house has to be seen to; Iversen continues the work of clearing away the snow and shaking things dry—while I lie up on the roof, with numb and frozen fingers, nailing canvas over all, to

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get the place properly covered in before a new storm comes and fills it up again with snow.

About midday we knock off work, to make a tour of inspection while it is still light, and see what remains of the *Alabama*. There is not much to be seen—only the stern, sticking up among the ice-blocks, a lonely monument to the memory of our lost ship; all that our comrades have saved from the wreck has been brought up on land and stowed away in perfect order; we shall want for nothing, that is one comfort.

What actually happened to the *Alabama* we do not know, as a message left by Laub has been lost in the snow. It does not interest us very much—the ship is lost, in what manner is of but slight importance, but we should have liked to know how things were with our companions when they left Greenland.

The house is fixed up and covered in—the quiet inaction of winter life begins.

What happens during the winter? Nothing very much. First of all we have to get some sort of an inventory of the contents of the provision shed—a dismal business, reminding us as it does continually of the *Alabama* and its fate. The things saved make a most curious and varied collection, reminding one rather of the contents of a schoolboy's pockets.

There are a lot of things for which we have no use at all, but there is an ample supply of everything we are likely to need, all save coal, which unfortunately was not brought to land. There is plenty of wood for fuel, but it has to be sawn up, and though we ought perhaps to be glad of the exercise it affords, it is disheartening work, sawing through a thick mast with a blunt saw.

There is plenty of work to be done, for although our housekeeping is simple, and our cooking far from luxurious, it all takes time, and we are not very handy at keeping house. We can warm up a tin of food well enough, but

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real cooking is rather out of our line, and our experiments in that direction are not always a success. Sauce, for instance, would seem easy enough, but the mixture of various ingredients which we evolve with much well-intentioned mental effort, turn out as a rule far from appetising. The first taste is generally sufficient. However, sauce cannot fairly be considered an indispensable article of diet, and we have plenty of butter. But it is irritating to have a hundred pounds of rice on hand, and not be able to make a decent dish of it. We have a try at it once or twice; it ought to be easy enough, and they say one learns these things by degrees, but unfortunately it appears to be always an even chance whether the resulting mass appears in the form of a gluey pudding or a watery soup.

Then there is bread; we have learned to make something resembling bread—or rather Iversen has, for the cooking is principally his department—and although sometimes far from perfect samples of the baker's art, we enjoy it as a rule. I am a hewer of wood and melter of water, and that gives me plenty to do. The wood especially takes time, for it takes an enormous amount to keep the place decently warm, and every stick of it has to be sawed and chopped and split. Even then we never manage to get more than a couple of degrees above freezing-point, and as a consequence the place nearest the stove is much sought after. The stove itself is frequently called into requisition, a dozen times a day we are obliged to pull off our kamicks and stick our frozen feet into the oven to get a little warmth into them. The floor of the place is always cold, and when it is blowing it is impossible to keep the temperature from falling below freezing-point. The only way is to light the big burner which has belonged to the motor. Then we can get up to twenty degrees, in the upper part of the room, but water spilt on the floor freezes immediately, and the air is so bad that the lamp will hardly keep alight.

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The motor burner is indispensable in stormy weather—and this means nearly every day, for although it was bad enough last year, it is nothing compared to this. It is always windy, and often blowing a gale for days together, making it difficult to leave the house, and impossible to stand upright outside.

We have visitors occasionally, a family named Fox having taken up their quarters in a snow-hill close by. We shoot them every day or so; it is rarely that the same occupier lives there more than a couple of days, but their relations come along and take possession, the rumour having been carried abroad that free meals are to be had close by for the trouble of picking them up, and the scraps flung outside our door continue to attract new lodgers as fast as we can shoot the old ones. Now and then some member of the clan, too impatient to wait his turn, enters into heated arguments with the present holder of the title and estates, which coming to our ears, we endeavour to settle the dispute as fairly as possible, though it goes to our hearts to shoot a Fox before he has had a chance of enjoying our hospitality. For the rest, North-east Greenland is not a fox-hunting country, and we feel as little sportsmanlike scruple at shooting the fox as we did at eating the hounds.

Otherwise the winter passes without event, and very soon Christmas comes round once more.

We make no elaborate preparations for the feast, beyond giving the house a sweep out, and ourselves a wash. Then we light a few candles, and all is ready. By way of a change we do not dine till seven: otherwise the meal is just like any other meal, as far as the menu is concerned.

A storm is raging outside, tugging furiously at the canvas roofing, and howling devilishly round corners and in the chimney, a shrieking, whining, roaring chorus of fiends, as though all hell were loose this night. We can almost see

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them, by looking out of the door—the snow is whirled and flung and scattered in fantastic forms, vague, shifting shapes that chase each other in furious flight towards the south. Inside the house is but little better, the burner smokes and smells in the middle of the floor, the candles flicker in the draught, and in spite of our efforts, it is far from comfortable in the soot-blackened, smoky cabin. No wonder that our thoughts go southward with the snow, southward to our homes and those that miss us, and this night perhaps least of all nights dare to speak of us whom they imagine lost. The feast—our pitiful travesty of a feast—culminates in a last toast for absent friends—the little whisky that yet remains to us, now evenly divided. And we turn in. It was a poor feast enough, but we have yet some reason to be glad—not indeed one usually associated with Christmas joys in ordinary circumstances, being simply the fact that the sun has reached the limit of its southern course, and turns now once again towards the north, with promise of brighter seasons; spring, then summer, ships, and home.

CHAPTER XIV

WAITING

Waiting—The second attempt—An exciting search—Back at Shannon Island—Our family—Hope deferred—The third winter—A day's shooting—More sledging—A nocturnal visitor—A six weeks' journey—A mystery—More foxes—Bass Rock.

A WINTER of long and weary days, one as another, without change. Nothing to break the endless monotony, no happenings to serve as milestones for one's thoughts, nothing by which to mark the length of waiting past or to come. And yet the time goes quickly, and we are glad of each night that comes, bringing us nearer to the day when the faint glow in the south shall give place to the sun itself, our idol here in the north.

There is long to wait yet, but each day we can see that it is coming nearer, the light in the south grows stronger, and spreads farther up into the sky, where nature lavishes a wealth of colour, every imaginable shade from reddest gold to a depth of blue, dark almost beyond the range of colour. Most beautiful of all are the days when some few clouds are spread about the sky, clouds of reddish gold that tinge the snow with delicately coloured light. But all this beauty makes the silence still more felt; we feel the need of other human beings to share with us this inexhaustible treasure; others who could feel and appreciate it more than we who are only longing for the sun, and for companionship of our kind, longing to see once more the light and motion

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of life about us, which now lies buried under the white snow. The loneliness is so immense, everything seems dead or in a trance, waiting, as we, for the advent of the life-giving sun.

At last the day arrives when it should appear, but we do not see it, for the weather is cloudy, stormy and foggy. Not until the following day, the 10th of February, do we see its red disc once more.

We stand outside the house, waiting. At the end of half-an-hour we begin to grow impatient. At last it comes, the glow to the southward deepens until it almost hurts the eyes, the mountain-tops are tinged with rose, slowly extending downwards towards us—then suddenly a red-gold ray is flung out over the ice, and we give a mighty shout of welcome—a cheer for the herald of summer, summer that is to bring us our deliverance.

And we are not the only beings that rejoice—far up above us sounds the astonished cry of a raven. It was flying eastward, but on seeing the sun it changes its course and steers right for it, with mighty strokes of its great heavy wings, and calling—glad as we to see the sun; a fire-worshipper, as also we have grown to be. We follow it with our eyes until it disappears in the eye of the sun—happy raven; if we had but wings!

But we are in the year of grace 1911, when men fly no more with wings of fairy tale, and in the Arctic, all too far from wings of science. Wishes avail but little, and we are glad to get back to our house, for it is cold—thirty degrees—and windy. But the sight of the sun has given us courage, and companionship of a sort; it is not so lonely now, and all about us the land is beginning to wake.

It makes us restless, however, and we long to make an end of this long inaction. We have been idling here so many days, while far to the north, among a cluster of rocks in the Skærfiord, lie all our notes. We do not like to talk

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about them, but they are none the less continually in our minds; somehow or other we have begun to fear that something may have happened, or may happen, to prevent our finding them, or reaching the spot. And neither likes to speak to the other of this our mutual fear.

Time goes on, and soon we have put together a little sledge, made some clothes, packed provisions, and got all ready. In case of accidents we have been down to the south-eastern point of Shannon Island, and left a message, for one never knows what may happen on a sledge trip.

On the 25th of April we start off. The weather is fine, the snow good, the sledge runs more easily than we had expected, and we are in first-rate spirits. But hauling a sledge is not a very exciting occupation, and before the first day's journey is at an end we are sighing for our lost dogs.

The journey proved impossible last autumn, but this time we must reach our goal. Impatient exclamations do no good, and only waste one's breath; we shut our lips together, brace our feet against the snow, and haul and shove for all we are worth. It is slow work and heavy, the ice gets rough after a while, and the snow soft, wind and fog are in league against us, but we get on somehow, reach Koldeway Island, and sledge up along the apparently endless coast. Here we come across a well-trodden bear-track—a beaten path, stamped out by the feet of bear after bear following the same route. The path is hard and fairly level, the only place that offers anything like decent going, for the snow is extremely deep and soft, as always, along the coast of Koldeway Island. We reach Danmarks Havn—it takes us ten days—and proceed up along the coast with its many dark memories from last autumn.

The journey is a succession of monotonous days, one just like another. We turn out, have our meal, haul like a

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couple of horses for ten hours, camp, eat again, and sleep—that is the regular order of the day, and beyond it nothing, pleasant or the reverse, happens until we reach the little rocky island where our diaries were left.

The first thing I catch sight of sends a cold shiver down my back—it is a piece of the canvas in which the books had been packed. Our fears of the last months have been justified—a bear has been at the depot and torn the whole thing to pieces. Two years' work destroyed, our whole summer of starvation valueless—and worse, an ignominious return, with the report—expedition carried out as per instruction—results eaten by a bear.

We pitch our tent in silence, and silently we begin digging about the snow. The whole thing seems hopeless now, however—where are we to look, where are we to begin? The wind may have carried our books far away, and then the snow. . . . But we hack away, sending the blocks of snow rolling down the rocks. Suddenly something glistens in the sun. It is our old tea tin—nothing in itself, but it gives us hopes, for where one thing is other things may be. We dig away with renewed energy, casting the snow to right and left, and now we begin to find things in earnest. A diary, a note-book full of observations, a roll of films and some cartridges. One of the last-named has been bitten flat by the bear—it would have served him right if it had exploded in his inside. Soon everything is found, with the exception of one of my diaries, of which only a few pages remain, torn and pierced by the teeth of the bear. Lucky it was no worse—for as Iversen has his diary, the loss is not so serious, but it is annoying to lose notes made under such difficult conditions. We dig all day, but the rest is nowhere to be found, so we give it up, and on the 16th we begin the journey back.

A description of our homeward trip, day by day, would contain nothing but the following entry continually repeated.

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Hauled ten hours—weather warm—snow soft—beastly work. To say the same thing half-a-score of times would be more than tedious; let it suffice to say, once for all, that so it was all the time. But we take it cheerfully enough, as well we may, for the precious diaries are on the sledge, and it cannot be more than a month now—or say six weeks at the outside—before a ship makes its appearance.

The house is cleared up and everything put in order, a letter written and nailed down to the table, the door securely fastened, and then, excited at the thought of speedy deliverance, we leave our winter quarters, the house our comrades had built for us, where we have spent, all things considered, a fairly comfortable winter, and regained our strength after the long and difficult journey. We fondly hope never to see it again. Alas, man proposes. . . .

We take up our quarters in the house on the south-eastern point of Shannon Island. There is open water to the south, the pack ice is scattered, and from a hill behind the house we can feast our eyes upon the dancing waves as we search the horizon for ships. We have hoisted a flag, which now flaps lazily in the light summer breeze; the snow has nearly melted from the land, and there is running water everywhere. The flowers have awakened, and spring out now in all their beauty; flowers grown in a single night—and there are green leaves on the little Arctic willows. It is spring—it is summer, and bird and beast are returning to the land that was so desolate a while ago. The snow-sparrows twitter, the air is full of little birds, and gnats, and flies; gulls and sea-swallows circle over the sea. Everywhere there is life—eider duck paddle about, and the seals are everywhere, bobbing up out of the water and hoisting themselves up on to the ice to bask in the warmth of the sun, while prowling bears are out on the war-path, hunting the great fat seal.

Up on the land, in a sheltered spot out of the wind, sit

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two little white lumps. They move but seldom, only now and then one of the round balls changes to a thin, straight line, standing on end—it is a hare and his wife, enjoying the peace of a summer day, in domestic felicity, while round about them the younger generation is represented by some tiny balls of soft greyish fur. Papa and mamma are watchful, for there are foxes about, and a wandering wolf. But what are these strange new creatures now approaching—big dark things, with two legs? The anxious parents raise themselves suspiciously, and stand balancing awkwardly on their long, thin hind legs, blinking in the sun, and stroking their chins with a meditative forepaw. The queer things are coming nearer—I'm off, says papa, and with a bound he is gone, while the mother gathers her little ones carefully close among the stones and dead leaves. Then she lies down, rolls herself almost into a ball, and stays quite still, only her long ears twitching nervously. It seems cruel to shoot so brave and loving a mother, but life *is* cruel up here, and without the less admiring her courage, we yet can take her life.

A shot rings out, the youngsters lie perfectly still—what is the matter with mother?—and what are those big things there? The big things are us, but we are no longer murderously inclined. The sight of the little frightened things goes to our heart—and their tiny squeaking is so pitiful to hear. Be quiet, you queer little fluffy things, we're not going to hurt you, only look after you, like father and mother did. We pick up the small, quivering lumps—there are six in all—put them in our pockets and carry them home.

We are parents now, and our youngsters must be properly looked after. We fix up a cosy little box for them, they look so jolly, tumbling about in it. We gather flowers and grass and willow twigs for them, and teach them to drink milk—all day we are watching and tending them. It gives us something to do, some interest in life beyond the monotony

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of our own daily needs. But parentage—or adoption—has its trials, and they wake us up during the night. Iversen, who has been cast for the part of loving mother, sits up in his bunk and says, “Sh!”—I am the heavy father, and must not be disturbed.

Summer is come indeed—and all so suddenly. We are longing for home, for fields and woods and human beings, and, strange as it may seem, for the look and feel of a dusty road—the thick, deep dust of roads in summer, grey on one’s boots and clothes, and dry and gritty in the mouth—even this can under certain conditions seem a thing to be desired.

Prospects are bright now—there is open water out to sea, and at any moment a ship may heave in sight. Every time we climb up to the flagstaff behind the house it is with a feeling of expectation—who knows what we may see this time? But the days go, and nothing comes. A storm is brewing in the north, and soon it is on us in all its fury, with howling wind, and rain, snow and hail. We hope the storm may drive the ice still farther away, but unfortunately the reverse is the case. As soon as it is over, and the mist has cleared, we climb up to have a look round. We reach the top of the hill, and stare in astonishment and dismay—there, where before was open water, is now nothing but ice—ice as far as eye can reach; from the coast right away to the horizon not a sign of water is to be seen.

Well, it is bad enough, but we hope for the best, summer has only just begun, and the ice may change again as suddenly for the better.

We resume our little tasks, digging out remains of Eskimo camps, shooting, doing all we can think of to pass the time, and in foggy or windy weather we stay indoors, playing with our youngsters, and talking of Copenhagen and home. We are beginning to get quite homesick.

The fog, by the way, is not a bad thing after all, inso-

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much as it furnishes matter for all sorts of guesses and pleasant imaginings—under cover of its impenetrable wall a ship might come up like a thief in the night. Often we stand outside the house, with every nerve strained to the utmost, listening to the roar and rumble beyond, out of which sounds every now and then a sharp crack as of a rifle-shot. We stare out into the fog, trying to pierce the grey, wet mass, listening—wasn't that a shot?—and from time to time we send up a shout in reply. The echo dies away, and we stand waiting for an answering call from those whom we hope are moving towards us over the ice. But nothing comes, and we turn back despondently into the house. We feel ourselves more lonely and forsaken now than ever—but it soon passes off. August is not yet in, and there may still come many ships.

But no ship comes. Up to the 15th of August there was hope, but that day passes, and now our chances seem pitifully small. And yet we do not altogether despair—we find the wildest reasons why no ship has come as yet, and tell each other that it may still reach us. But deep down in our minds a devil is whispering incessantly—"Fool, you cannot deceive yourself"—and in our inmost thoughts each of us knows that there is no hope; it is long now since either of us dared to speak of home. That which before was our most cherished subject of conversation is now by common consent banished—it is but feeding the flame of disappointment.

We used to go up to the flagstaff once or twice a day, but now we spend most of our time there, sitting in silence, and staring out over the white expanse of frozen sea, the insurmountable barrier between us and deliverance. Accursed ice, how we hate it! Why should this year be so much worse than other years? have we not been through enough already? But the ice is always there, unchanged, with never a glimpse of water anywhere. The wind veers round in the course of days from north to east, and south,

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and west and north again, the ice remains there, hard and white and cold. It is a sight pregnant with despair, and yet we try to cheat ourselves into some semblance of hope, reminding each other that ships have been here as late as the 25th of August.

One day we are standing outside the house, staring dismally at the desert of ice, when suddenly we catch sight of something away to the south. Can it be a ship? It looks like a schooner with topsails set, moving rapidly away from Pendulum Island. We dash up the hill to have a look, tumbling over the rocks in our haste, and reach the top, where the glass is always in readiness—now! It looks like a ship, sure enough, but we must wait and see.

The next hour is an exciting time. At last, however, it proves, as so often before, that what we had taken for a ship, was nothing after all but a piece of ice, our dream of deliverance is ended, and the awakening makes reality doubly hard.

It has begun to freeze again, and we have had snow. The mountain tops are white, and the whole scene looks like winter. About the 20th of August, however, there is a movement in the ice, and in a few days it will be passable. It is an anxious time. We sit up on the highest point, like the corsair's wife, "watching all that hope proclaimed a mast." Still we cling to hope, and see a ship in every sharp and pointed piece of ice—illusion, and we know it, but we dare not give up hope.

At last we must, however. We are forced to face the situation as it is, and admit that a year must pass before the torch of hope can once more lighten up the darkness around us. There is snow on the land—the herald of approaching autumn, and the thick ice on the ponds brings the same message. The flowers are faded, the little leaves of the willow long since fallen, all tells that summer is gone, and with it hope. We are loth to recognise it, however, until

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one day a great flock of sparrows pass the house, flying southwards, and we can no longer hide from ourselves the fact that winter is at hand.

The birds move southward now, in great flocks, and we watch them as they go with longing eyes; they are on their way to warmer, kinder lands, and chirp and twitter in delight. For each flight that leaves us we feel more and more alone, soon only a few stragglers will be left, and then the beasts whose home is here—fox and wolf and bear. And we ourselves—but it almost seem as if we, too, belonged here.

The southward flight is ended now. We hear no longer the hoarse cry of the gulls or the sharp pipe of the sea-swallows: the little birds that lived and moved on land are gone, the seals have ceased to sun themselves up on the ice, and our young hares have grown. It is full autumn now—and yet September has but just begun—and we who dreamed our wondrous dreams of autumn at home in Denmark, with men and trees and fields and dusty roads. We are helpless, however, and can but stay and wait. But the bitterness of disappointment is heavy on us yet, and we say but little to each other. We know full well that a whole long winter must pass before any ship can come, and yet we steal up now and then to the top of the hill and stare over the sea. We go alone, saying nothing of it to each other, but sneaking out of the house as on some other errand, and going a long way round as if in search of game. At times one creeping up the hill may find the other there; a painful meeting, on the spot where we a few weeks back stood hopefully together, watching for the ship that yet might come. We laughed and joked about it then, but now we only smile wearily to each other, as though to say, What the devil do you expect to find—a ship? And always we have some excuse ready—"there was something moving, so I came up to see," or "thought I heard a ptarmigan up here."

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The days drag wearily along. Before, when we were waiting for a ship, while still the open water left us hope, the time went all too quickly, but now each day seems endless, and we sit for long hours brooding over the disappointment of our expectations. It is not only the fact that no ship came : that we were prepared for. But we ourselves could have gone off down the coast in a boat, if only the ice had given us a chance. But even this is impossible, the ice lies unbroken in our winter haven, and the pack ice is so thick close in to land that no boat can get through it. Everything has failed us, and we have nothing to do but sit and think of what might have been.

But we must face the position as it is, and make our preparations for a third winter. We have to get back to our winter haven ; there is plenty to do, getting the necessities of life transported down to Bass Rock. And yet it is hard to leave our present quarters ; it seems like setting the seal upon our resignation of all hope, and we put off our departure from day to day. There is always some excuse. Either it is blowing a gale, or else it looks like one, and it is a long way, especially as we are to go without either tent or sleeping bags, so we must have decent weather.

September is a month of violent storms. Earth and sky are blotted out, a heavy, hollow sea is running, and the spray is flung right up to the house, freezing where it falls. By the time the storm is over—it is the worst we have had this summer—there is a layer of ice three inches thick over the house, every rock and stone is cased as in glass, and down on the shore is a wall of ice several feet high. After a gale of this sort we can safely reckon on a couple of days of fair weather, and take the opportunity to make a move, for by now—it is the 20th of September—it is impossible to delude ourselves any longer with hopeful visions, we know now what we have to do. The certainty, however, is better than our former hoping against hope, not daring to expect, and

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yet not daring to give up. We talked but little in those days; now, however, we have grown more cheerful. We have even made a song for the occasion, beginning—

“ Three long years on the Greenland ice,
Yo ho ho—and a bottle of rum ! ”

We haven't any rum, but that is a detail. So off we go, our guns at our backs and a biscuit in our pocket—that is the extent of our equipment, for we have learned by hard degrees to want but little here below. We march along gaily over the level land, singing, or rather shouting, at the top of our voices; it cheers one up to make a bit of noise. A startled raven gets up and flies away shrieking—a vulgar bird, that raven, incapable evidently of appreciating the music of the human voice.

Autumn can be very pleasant in the Arctic. It is not too cold as yet, the weather is generally fine, the ground good to walk over, and in spite of our disappointment we feel quite comfortable up here, and enjoy the freedom of unrestricted movement—trespassers are not prosecuted in the Arctic—and unlimited shooting—gun-licenses and game-keepers are unknown in North-east Greenland. We are monarchs of all we survey, and rather like the feeling, which shows that there is something pleasant to be got out of nearly every situation—if only one is disposed to look for it. Our march proves also a success from the hunter's point of view : first we manage to bag a hare, which we take along with us, then we run up against a couple of musk ox, and after a short chase, succeed in driving them out on to a spit of land with young ice on either side. Here they stand at bay, and finally make a sortie, the smaller urged on to action by his bigger comrade, who doesn't seem inclined to take the offensive in person, but contents himself with butting the other in the hindquarters until he makes a half-hearted advance. It looked ridiculously like a big bully

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egging on a small fag to fight a smaller one—in *casu* myself. They come on, the little one ahead and the big one behind, increasing their pace to a thundering gallop, and I begin to feel a little uncomfortable, for there is no sort of cover anywhere, and Iversen is a long way behind.

At fifty yards or so I try a shot—it serves at any rate to check their rush, and, Iversen coming up shortly after, the two stand disconcerted, not knowing which of us to go for. Their plan of attack having failed, they seem incapable of further concerted action. Now they make towards Iversen, with a “walk into my parlour” sort of air, now they seem to recollect that they have a grudge against me, and invite me in the plainest terms to take off my coat and come on. Each change of front, however, lays their flank open to the fire of one or other of us, and soon they have got more lead than they can carry. We raise a victorious howl, for we are glad of the meat. We have shot one or two musk ox down at the depot, but have no fresh meat up here on the northern side. The beasts are cut up and cleaned in no time, and we get under way again, chanting the new and popular song “Three long years on the Greenland ice”—sung with great success by the members of the Shannon Island troupe. At last, utterly tired out, we reach the house which we had closed up in June, hoping never to see it again.

The walls are glittering with rime, it is close and stuffy, the place is dark, and anything but inviting. But we have put away our disappointment once and for all, and do our best now to take it cheerfully. We even try to make each other believe that we had been expecting it all along, reiterating a triumphant “I told you so” with the air of a street boy saying “Yah!”

We get ready for sledging, pack up what things we shall want and make preparation for the winter. But it takes us some time, for the weather is unsettled and inclined to

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be stormy, and we are obliged to spend several days indoors.

This, however, is nothing new, we have been through it all the winter before; the wind howling round the corners and tearing at the roof, the snow that gets in through nowhere; and our old friend the stove is again called upon to do duty as a footwarmer. It is dull work staying indoors; we have read everything readable more than once, we know each other's opinion on all subjects that are dreamt of in our philosophy, and every time we begin to talk about anything at all, each knows exactly what the other is going to say—it is like a stage duel. We are weary of each other's voices, and all the jokes that either of us know have long since been worn threadbare. The contrast between what we had hoped for and what has fallen to our lot becomes more and more unbearable, and we are soon not far off despair.

It is impossible to stay indoors any longer, I get into my furs and turn out—a brisk run up and down the snow hill just outside may serve to clear the cobwebs from my brain. But it is cold, and the driving snow adds to the discomfort—was there ever such a beastly country! And I get to earth again. Suddenly we hit on a bright idea. We will invite two of our countrymen from Covent Garden to sing for us. The gramophone is soon wound up, and presently Messrs. Herold and Cornelius are singing as they have never sung before. This is the literal truth, for our needle is blunt, and has to be filed each time, with such result as would surely justify either of the gentlemen named in bringing an action for libel. It does not in the least diminish our enjoyment, however; on the contrary, variety is for us the rare and very welcome spice of life. But even this palls at last, and we are delighted when the spring breaks, giving us something to do to get the thing into working order again. Dull days, indeed, but nothing to what is still before us. Three hundred days—how shall we ever get through them?

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We try to lay the blame on the weather—we shall feel cheerful enough as soon as it is fine, but it is a hard job to keep up one's spirits here where nothing ever happens—never the slightest incident or event from outside—and we are delighted at last to be able to start off in quest of the two musk ox which we shot on the journey up. On the way we encounter a new herd, twenty at least. In a moment the lust of the chase is awakened, and crawling on all fours along the now dry river-beds we get close up to the unsuspecting beasts. They are grazing peacefully, the little calves hopping about on their delightfully crooked little legs; here a cow is licking her offspring—very much after the manner of a nursemaid washing a small boy, only with an exemplary patience on the part of the washed—there a couple of bulls are regarding each other with the smouldering fire of impending challenge in their eyes. They paw the ground impatiently, lower their horns and “sharpen” them on their forelegs, then a shot—another—a calf is hit in the hindquarters and a cow has a bullet in her chest. The two bulls forget their quarrel, the cows rush hither and thither in confusion, while the calves roar in fear. At last some sort of order is established, the animals close up in a line and gaze about in search of the hidden enemy. We fire again—one too high, the other too low. A bullet ploughs up the ground right in front of a big bull, he roars, flings himself round and makes off, followed by the whole flock, with the exception of the wounded calf. Lightly and gracefully they spring over the ground; a cow in the rear stops and looks round, for her precious offspring is left upon the field, bellowing with pain and terror at being alone. Poor mother—her maternal instinct struggles for a moment with her fear, then she catches sight of us, gives a despairing grunt, and gallops off after the rest. Panting and breathless we follow them up, but the herd is trying to break away, and we shall lose them all unless we can manage to drive

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them out on to a point, where we can get as many as we want.

After a chase of about half-an-hour we have got the herd between us, and are driving them where we want them to go. They are utterly confused, and make little dashes backward and forward, but all the time getting nearer to the point. Now we have them ! They are standing bunched together on a narrow headland, with a fall of 300 feet below, and us above, creeping down towards them under cover of the rocks, until we are only ten feet away. Shot after shot is fired, the herd stand trembling, huddled close together, and swaying backwards and forwards, while a cloud of moisture rises from their heated and panting bodies into the cold air. At last they grow desperate, a bull takes the lead and dashes out, the others follow, and soon the whole herd is charging up the hillside with lowered heads and waving manes. We gaze admiringly after the beautiful, graceful creatures, and feel something like regret at seeing a couple of badly wounded ones fall over and expire. We follow slowly after the retreating herd, we have done enough damage for one day and could not do more if we would, for we had not reckoned on finding big game, and our ammunition is expended.

Up on the top of the hill stands a cow, bleeding from two nasty wounds, and foaming red at the mouth. That she is dying is plain to see, but to the last she seeks to defend her two calves, and turns painfully towards us to take the shock of our attack. It is heartrending to see, but we cannot put her out of her pain, for we have no more ball cartridges, and a charge of shot would be useless. We should like to get the two calves, but cannot come at them ; they shelter themselves behind their wounded mother, who keeps her head turned towards us. We try to drive her off by throwing stones ; the first shot has no effect, the second catches a calf right on the forehead with a thump, and the

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little creature stands swaying on its feet, gives a bellow and runs a few yards, followed by the other, stops, turns round to look at its mother, bellows again and continues its flight. Slowly and painfully the cow turns round towards the calves—taking not the slightest notice of us, now that the youngsters are out of our way—cautiously she lifts one foot and then the other, gasping with pain all the time, and staggers slowly off across the plain, a calf on either side.

Iversen and I sit on a rock and look at each other. We don't feel very nice inside. A splendid bag—but still, it wasn't exactly sportsmanlike, somehow. The despairing eyes of the wounded cow and her gasps and groans of pain make things look different—it was a murderous business.

Down on the plain lies the wounded calf. That we can take back with us, and off we go to fetch it. It ought to be dead now—but it isn't. There it lies, moving its head slightly, with a fox sitting up beside it, licking his lips, and torturing the poor wounded creature, that tries to drag itself away out of reach—it is a horrible thing to wound and not kill.

But the day's hunting has given us something to talk about : matter for conversation for at least a week, and we are almost as glad of that as of the meat, which, by the way, is excellent. Iversen proves himself a culinary genius, and the rich joints—roasted in a bread-pan—are a huge success.

On the 4th of October we begin the autumn sledging. It is heavy work, for we have to shift some 1500 pounds of meat, petroleum and gear, besides a boat weighing 425 pounds. It is a lot for two men to haul, but the wind is generally northerly, and we use it, rigging up a sail both on the boat and on the sledge. As long as there is wind we get along famously, but a calm is greeted with curses loud and deep.

We are taking everything along, not wishing to be dependent on the arrival of a ship next year. We still have our headquarters at the house, taking load after load

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forward as far as we can get in a day, and then returning home. It is better than sleeping in a tent, especially in such rough weather, but it is not easy to tear ourselves away from the comfortable quarters, where we have soft bread and many other little conveniences, which we have to do without when sledging.

One night—one of the last spent in the house—we have a little adventure with a bear, that comes to pay us a nocturnal visit. I had been dreaming of railway trains, and now imagined myself awake, puzzled to understand how it was the noise of which I had just been dreaming still continued. I was on Shannon Island last night—or was that a dream? Suddenly the truth flashes across my brain, and I am wide awake in a moment. It is a bear, hammering at the door of the hut. “Iver!” I whisper cautiously; no answer. “Iver”—a little louder this time, but Iver snores peacefully on. “Wake up, man, there is a bear outside!” That does it. “Where?” he asks excitedly, raising himself up in his bunk, and next moment a cold shiver runs through my body, as my comrade solemnly exclaims, “Good Lord—the brute’s *inside*. Look there!”

“What!” In a fever of excitement I feel about for my knife—the only weapon at hand, for our rifles hang behind the door—there where the bear is standing. Iversen is also preparing for attack, and while I am fumbling for a light, he picks up a stocking, and flings it right at the beast’s head. “Ugh! get out, you brute!” It is a ticklish position, and we are both in a fever of excitement; what will happen next? At last I get the matches, and strike a light; the tiny flame shows two startled, hairy heads sticking out of two bunks and staring at the door, behind which hangs—and here I burst out laughing—the rear end of a slaughtered musk ox, which Iversen in his half-dreaming state and the fantastic moonlight had taken for

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a bear. But the real bear is not far away, I can hear him scratching about outside. A moment later Iversen is at the door, staring out, with rifle in hand. All is silent now, and there is nothing to see : he returns, grinning scornfully, while I turn over on the other side, trying not to hear his rude remarks about my dreams. Next morning, however, there is no doubt about the bear's having been there, his tracks are plain in the snow outside, and he has been digging holes round about the house. This time it is my turn to jeer at Iversen, who sits cleaning his gun, and swearing that it shall hang beside his bunk for the future. It was just as well, perhaps, that it wasn't there last night, for bullets flying about in a confined space are apt to do unexpected damage.

On the 16th of October we leave our house for good, and now begins a period of six weeks' continual toil before we reach Bass Rock. The boat has to be got forward, but we can only move it when there is wind to help us, and often have to lie up for a day waiting for a breeze, while if it blows too hard, the boat will not stand straight. We get along fairly well, however, all things considered, for our strength is not what it used to be, and the autumn is not a good time for the work. It is excruciatingly cold at times, below 30°, and calm and storm alike hinder our progress. But we are very comfortable in our little tent, and spend many cosy hours talking, as we have so often done before, of the summer that is to come.

We have reckoned out—heaven knows how—that there are only six months now before we can again begin to hope for a ship. We comfort ourselves as well as we can with the thought—six months is not such a very long time after all. But in the meantime, we are only anxious to get down to Bass Rock, for this work is anything but pleasant.

The sun is going down now. Already it hangs, a blood-red disc, above the southern horizon ; a couple of days more,

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and it will be gone. We do not see the last of it, however, for a storm comes up—the sun is to be “blown down” as usual, and for three days we lie in our little tent, listening to the thrashing of the storm and the driving snow, which drums on the stretched canvas of our shelter. We are glad the sun has gone, it means so much of the time of waiting past, and all brings us nearer the end. But we have not got so far as we expected, the boat still lies on the ice, stopped by a pressure ridge which we cannot get over, and there it must stay until the spring. We are also forced to leave behind a lot of petroleum, as well as all the gear which we shall want in case of our using the boat. With a third of our load we haul in to Shannon Island, where part of it is to be stowed away.

During the last few days we have been much tumbled up and down in our minds owing to a remarkable occurrence, somewhat in the nature of Robinson Crusoe's encounter with the footprint in the sand. Our advanced load has been attacked—an empty petroleum cask is found riddled with tiny holes, such as would be made by a charge of shot ! Now a charge of shot is scarcely likely to materialise out of nowhere; one is accustomed to associate the phenomenon with the presence of human beings. It is none of our doing—then whose doing is it ? We hit upon the wildest theories to account for it, as we sit in the tent turning the mysterious object over and over. No beast of our acquaintance could make all those little round holes; what animal could even open its jaws so wide ? And why should anybody take the trouble to make a target of our gear ? Are there Eskimos about—Eskimos with guns ? There are no footprints to be seen : it could scarcely have been an animal—the whole thing is highly mysterious. We have plenty to talk about for a couple of days, and we listen intently for the sound of footsteps. We should not be at all surprised to hear a shout outside the tent—and we talk

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over what we should do if we did. Apparently our two-and-a-half years' stay up here is beginning to tell on our brains.

On the 11th of November we reach the depot on Shannon Island with all the things which are to be left there, and we are glad to get in to shelter, for it is nasty weather; windy, with clammy banks of fog alternating with driving snow. But the wind helps us, we have the sledge under sail, and get through with the whole load—about 800 pounds. It is heavy work all the same, and we are fagged out by the time we reach the house. Everything is as we left it, save that the ravens and foxes have started keeping open house, and call up their disreputable relations from highways and byways to feast on the remains of the meat. A pair of foxes have taken up their quarters underneath the house, and when we arrived we found them sitting outside, brushing their fur and looking at us as if to say, "Who the deuce are you?" As we came nearer, however, they turned tail and went to ground, where they remained, setting up a most diabolical noise by way of protest.

The miserable concert keeps on until ten o'clock at night, while we lie in our sleeping bags, promising them the most diabolical tortures when we get hold of them. At last they stop, and we manage to get to sleep, but in the middle of the night they begin feasting on the musk ox meat, which most unfortunately lies on the top of an empty tin, and the resulting noise is awful. Their legs hammer like drumsticks on the hollow tin, it is impossible to sleep. At last we can stand it no longer, and Iversen steps on tiptoe across the floor, gun in hand, and murder in his heart. I am already enjoying the triumph in anticipation, but as soon as he opens the door they are gone, down into their earth under the house, where they keep up a chorus of jeering barks. This manoeuvre is repeated at least half-a-score of times during the night, Iversen stealing continually backwards and forwards between his sleeping bag and the

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door. I stay where I am, preferring, if one must be kept awake, to remain in my bunk, and make myself as comfortable as possible. Towards morning the brutes seem to have had their fill, and turn in to sleep. Peace reigns for a while, but it is only a truce until we are up, and then we take our revenge, opening hostilities by firing a few shots down into their earth, and then doing our best to annoy them as much as possible by chopping wood on the floor above their heads. Angry grunts from below fill us with mischievous delight; this time it is they who want to get to sleep. It is war to the knife, and next night we manage to bag one of the brutes. The survivor howls for half-an-hour or so and then begins barking defiance, to reappear soon after among the provisions, where a well-directed bullet concludes the operations of the punitive expedition. These things being accomplished, we are able to sleep in peace once more.

It is over a fortnight now since the sun went down, and we must get the rest of the journey done—the trip from here down to Bass Rock. It is hard to leave the cosy house where we are so comfortable, and start off once more on the trail, even though the distance this time is but short. We find all manner of excuse, reading the omens as unfavourable—either it looks like snow, or else the ragged cirrus clouds threaten a storm. Even in the clearest sky we find an excellent reason for postponing our departure—such weather is certainly too good to last. However, go we must, sooner or later, and on the morning of the 20th of November, with a fresh north-easterly breeze, we pull ourselves together, hoist our sail, and get under way. It is splendid going, level ice almost free from snow, and the wind takes the sledge along at such a pace, that we have to run in order to keep up with it. This is something like sledging, we laugh to each other—but on the lee, not more than a mile away, there is open water, stretching right away to the horizon. The seas break over the edge of the

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ice, the foam is flung before the wind, and great pieces are broken off. The open water does not look promising, but we hope for the best. We had a gale a couple of days ago, and the ice held, let's hope it will hold now.

We hurry along at top speed, the runners shrieking over the ice. The low headland on Shannon Island, where the house stands, is lost now in the driving snow, there is rough ice ahead, and heavy clouds above the heights of Pendulum Island threaten a storm. The wind howls through the rigging, but our shouts are heard above it, we are quite excited at the furious pace. Thump! we are in among the pressure ridges now, and the sledge brings up against a soft bank of snow, working its way slowly deeper and deeper in under the pressure of the wind. Down goes the sail, and we put our shoulders to the sledge; we have made twelve miles good running before the wind, and are ready to do a bit of hard work now.

We do not reach Bass Rock that night, but camp in some anxiety as to what the morrow will bring. It is frightfully heavy work getting through the soft snow among the crushed-up ice, but we are nearing the end of our journey now, and by dint of hard hauling we reach the land at last. On a jutting headland we see a big pole sticking up, and as we approach, we discover a cross on the top. We stare at each other—what can it mean? A cross? Sacred perhaps to the memory of—us? We leave the sledge, and hurry on to the house, break open the door, and with feverish haste I read the messages left. There is one from Laub to the sealers, one from the sealers, saying that they are going on to get out of the ice, all well on board, and finally a message from the *Laura*, dated 25th of July, 1911, while we were up at Shannon Island, waiting for a ship. So near they have been—only sixteen miles between us and the salvation we dreamed of, human beings, civilisation, home! We are too overwhelmed even to

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swear, we sink down on a case, the thought hammering into our brain—sixteen miles, sixteen little miles—and heaven knows whether any ship will come next year. It is a heavy blow : our hard-won resignation is shattered, and we sit there, each on our box, thinking of what might have been, thinking of the pitiful little stretch of ice that stood between us and deliverance. It was hard enough before, but it is infinitely harder now—for conscience speaks unceasingly—why did you not come down here in the spring and leave a message—and save all those who care for you from bitter anxiety ?

If we had but done so—but who could know, who could imagine this ?

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST YEAR

Another winter—The third Christmas—Dreams and fancies—
Our four-footed guests—Up to Shannon Island—Burglars—An
exciting encounter—The sun once more—An attempt to
escape—Back again—More mysteries—An anxious time—
Deliverance.

WE do not discuss the situation—there is nothing to discuss. We fall to our work of shifting the heavy provision cases, and endeavour to forget that a ship has been here, only sixteen miles from the place where we were waiting and hoping to the last that a ship might come. What troubles us most is the fact that we neglected to leave a message here—had we done so, then our friends would have known that we were alive, and had made the journey all right, and we should have saved them a year's anxious waiting. As far as we ourselves are concerned, it would have made no difference, for no ship could have reached the spot where we were at the time when the *Laura* called here, and yet it would have been encouraging to think of the relief to those who were waiting for us. The thought would have gone far towards lightening the burden of long winter days, which now seem more than ever weary and miserable. Our thoughts are busy with dismal speculations as to the consequence of our neglect—the period of solitude which yet must pass stretches away in an endless perspective of days unspeakably dark and comfortless.

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After three days of hard work the house is ready, the healthy toil has picked us up a bit, and we make some timid attempts at conversation. To all outward seeming we have regained our normal condition, but deep down in the mind of each is an open wound, which aches afresh at every thought of home. At such time silence falls between us; one thinks of the needless sorrow caused to family and friends, and doubts spring up as to our own future, for the winter that is coming will be a hard and heavy time.

It is still so light that we can see to walk, and we take every possible advantage of it, climbing up to the top of Bass Rock, and looking out over all the open water away to the east, wandering over the ice, and going off on hunting expeditions after bear or hares—anything to get away from the haunting dismal thoughts that still hover about us indoors.

It is a sad spectre that haunts us here, and we try all sorts of things to keep it off. We talk away desperately of trivial things, not daring to stop, for silence gives the ghost its chance, and we cannot but hear the inevitable whisper of reproach. And so we chatter away, caring little what we talk of or what we say, only striving to keep the flow of words going without a break. Silence is golden—everywhere but here; for us speech, continual speech is the only saving grace, and silence must be avoided at any cost.

What can we find to talk about, up here where nothing happens? It is hard to begin, but as we go on, we manage to keep it going. We cling to a topic like drowning men to a plank, thrashing it all out over and over again—it may give rise to a chance remark which in its turn can provide us with a new opening to follow up, and keep us going for the rest of the day. Politics make a splendid subject, and are easy to talk about. One of us takes the part of staunch

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conservative, the other becoming a socialist of the deepest dye. True, all the matters we argue about are two and a half years old now, but the world has stood still—for us—all that time. We thrash out the problem of Defence, which was a burning question at the time when we left Copenhagen, we talk of the miseries of the submerged tenth, and find new and wonderful ways of giving them a decent time all round. Questions of international politics are also dealt with, we arrange European complications of the direst, take liberties with the map, and finally let loose the dogs of war. Until at last, so great is the power of imagination, we have created a European disturbance of such dimensions that the civilised world, harried by internal troubles, will forget our existence, and—no ships will come next year! It is borne in upon us that we are going too far, and we drop the subject. Having no other at hand, we pace in silence up and down the floor, hands in our pockets, the wildest thoughts now harassing our brains—what if we should be left here for yet another winter, and what of those at home? The thread of conversation is broken, and politics, our one sheet-anchor, has failed us; our intelligence is balancing on the perilous edge of madness.

We are silent for an hour or two. The end of the day draws near, and a fragment of an old hymn, learnt in one's childhood, flashes across one's mind again :

“Thank God for every day that dies,
And for each day that dawns”—

the first part of the sentiment we most heartily approve, and the verse is repeated over and over again—thank God for every day that dies!

I lie in my sleeping bag, poring over *Adam Bede*—one of the few books I have with me. I have read it half-a-score of times, and I know it almost by heart, but that doesn't matter. Mechanically my eyes follow the words,

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growing drowsier by degrees, and the book hangs heavier in my hands; I rouse myself sufficiently to blow out the light, and fall asleep.

And sleep is a whole new world, for there are dreams—dreams wherein one moves among other human beings, freed from the prison which is closed about our waking life. It is a joy to bring back to reality the remembrance of such a dream;—that was a splendid one, with all those people in it. I must remember to tell Iver about that! And then one falls a-dreaming again, of Denmark, Copenhagen, and of life that moves so many ways about the world. It is good to be able to spend some hours of the twenty-four away from this monotony of ice and snow; one leads, as it were, a double life, and the hardest day or the most weary ends in the pleasant world of dreams.

But then the brutal awakening by the alarm clock, when one is in the middle of an extra-special dream! Angrily one turns over on the other side, praying to all kindly gods for leave to continue where one left off. But the prayer is not answered, and then comes Iversen's voice—"I say, I was at Uncle Søren's last night—he had a party!"

"No, really? How jolly! And what did he say?"—and then follows a full report of Uncle Søren's party, and who was there and what they said and did; Uncle Søren had got a new cow—Has he though?—well, I never!—and the conversation goes on swimmingly after that. The cow of dreams leads us into a discussion upon agriculture—country life—country society, doctors and parsons. From parsons the talk glides naturally over to religion, and there we have something to talk about all day, until it is time to sleep again.

It is a barren existence, and it is almost a relief to wake up one night with a raging toothache. Toothache is at any rate something new, and almost any change is a welcome relief. But it is painful, nevertheless, and grows worse

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when I most illogically proceed to reckon out that counting from to-day, the 14th of December, there are—let me see, January, February, March—seven months—equals 210 days, twenty-four hours per day, with toothache every hour of every day—ugh! And I march up and down the floor, nursing my jaw in one hand, contemplating in imagination the horrible army of hours, marching by in a ghostly procession, each single hour armed with Toothache!

However, the toothache does not last quite so long. It soon passes, and the days are as before, dull beyond all words. We still talk of politics, religion, everything under the sun, striving to keep away the spectre of silence and unfettered thought. Until at last something actually happens. We discover the tracks of a hare outside the house, and set about discussing means of capture. It is too dark to shoot now, and the hare, for some reason or other, pays her morning calls at night. For a couple of days we are busily employed thinking out a trap, one more day passes pleasantly with the actual construction, and we grow quite cheerful at the thought of Mr. Hare's astonishment when he finds himself a prisoner. Yet another day is spent in poking out our heads every five minutes to see if we have caught our hare. We are as pleased as children with our contrivance and the new method of passing the time, and rejoice exultantly on hearing a horrible noise outside. Our friend has arrived—and come to stay. Cautiously we open the door a little way, and look down at the captive, who sits hunched up, staring at us with frightened eyes. But it is cold, and we get back to our sleeping bags to discuss the question of how it is to be killed. We cannot very well shoot a live thing in a trap, and to kill it with a stick seems nasty. After an hour's discussion, however, we agree to the latter method, and soon the execution is carried out. One knock on the head, and it is all over—our Christmas dinner is assured.

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A couple of days later we come across its mate, crouching under a rock almost at our feet. The poor thing is too frightened even to run, and it is impossible to miss it at that distance. Shortly after the two hares are hanging side by side—the second, we have decided, will keep till New Year's Day.

It is very calm all through December, and we are almost longing for wind; it is so pleasant to sit comfortably indoors and listen to the howling of the gale outside. Occasionally a gust comes tearing down from the mountains with a shriek and a roar, then it is gone and all is still once more. Only now and then we have a feeling that there is life and motion about us, when the creaking and groaning from seawards tells that the pack ice is bearing down on the land ice, with a shattering, splintering song that seems to ring in some strange harmony with the unheard music of the coldly glittering stars.

Star-gazing is one of our daily occupations; we look up at the ones which are visible in the sky at home, and feel ourselves somehow in contact with the outside world—who knows, perhaps others may be looking at that very star at the same moment—and distant as the point of contact is, we have yet a feeling of being less alone.

Christmas comes round again, the third we have spent up here. Hare and rice pudding and stewed fruit are to deck the festive board, and while Iversen is busy roasting and baking and boiling, I go about armed with a nondescript something which was once a broom, scraping away at the floor. We tidy our bunks, roll up our sleeping bags, and make the place as decent as possible. That is all our preparation for Christmas—less even than last year, for we washed then, a luxury which is impossible now, the soap having been forgotten. There is a hare that has been sneaking about outside, picking up a miserable existence on what it can find. But it is Christmas time, the season of peace on earth

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and goodwill to men. For the first, we close the trap, by way of truce, and for the second—goodwill to men may well be extended to include the beasts of the field, especially when the nearest men are far beyond the reach of our goodwill, and we strew some oatmeal about outside for Little Brother.

This done, we sit down to table and try to work up some sort of proper feeling by talking over Christmasses gone by. But it doesn't last very long, and soon we are sitting in silence, each on his bunk, thinking of what might have been. It is with a feeling of relief that we see the hands of the clock moving round towards eight, then we can turn in, hoping to keep our Christmas as it should be kept in that kindly other world of dreams where we spend our happiest hours.

The sun is moving upwards now once more. It is only a few days since it turned, but already we try to fancy that it is growing lighter every day, and with the increasing light the thought of our homecoming gathers strength; at last we dare to speak of it, encouraging each other with pictures that grow ever more wonderful as our imagination becomes bolder. All day we walk up and down indoors, one on each side of the stove, talking of the splendid things to come. The barrier of silence is broken, we talk unceasingly and without reserve; our fancy roves in unfettered flight as we make plans for our first day at home. One treasure we have with us here in our barely furnished hut, a treasure which we have carried all the way from our winter quarters. It is nothing but a score of picture postcards, a poor enough thing in most people's eyes, but for us they form a link with the world, a message to cheer us up and feed our starving thoughts—for us a treasure indeed. They have been hidden away for the last month or so, but now that we have passed the turning-point, we take them out again, and look once more at the pictures

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from home. A market-place, where men and women move—a cow grazing in a field—a bit of woodland—were ever trees so green? We have—or rather Iversen has, for the cards are his—a postcard from a school of cookery, fifty-three girls standing outside a big building. This is perhaps the one we most appreciate. We have given them all names. Miss Long, Miss Black, Miss Strange; we know them all, and have spent hours talking about them. We have made up a little story about each of them, and time and again we take a lens from the glass to examine their faces more closely and determine their true characters. The discussion of Miss Side, for instance, generally winds up with a mutual vow to look her up one day when we get home, tell her exactly how the matter stands, and ask her straight out whether she is as conceited as she looks.

There are endless possibilities for discussion in each one of them, and we are grateful to these three-and-fifty girls who stand there so smiling and happy. We have each our special flame; Iversen's is a little dark-haired thing, whom he calls Miss Brisk, while I have chosen a tall, strongly built girl with fine features, and christened her Miss Hardy. Alas, our lady friends are losing their good looks all too soon, for the card, by much handling, has become smeared and indistinct—our fingers are generally dirty. We do our best to clean it up now and then, but there is no denying the fact, the girls are not as beautiful as they used to be.

It is a mad sort of life, full of dreams and fancies and memories—no wonder that we long for the return of the sun, which besides many other good things, brings with it the possibility of activity and release, in some degree at least, from this unreal existence. The sun is a standing topic of conversation, and each day at noon we go out to watch the increasing light. The thought of the sun has given us the go-fever, and we are actually speculating over

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how far it would be possible to effect our own release without waiting for help from outside.

We agree to make the attempt, but there are two ways to choose between, both equally risky, and we cannot decide which to take, whether to trust to the drift of the pack ice, and go by boat, or to try and get down to Angmasalik with the sledge. After many days of thought and endless discussion, we decide at last to try the latter course, and begin making preparations for the start.

This fills up our time more or less, and forms a welcome substitute for the idiotic conversation which has become our habit of late. Moreover, we have started taking in lodgers, our first guest being a little white fox that we caught in the trap. He was a handsome fellow when we got him—sat there in the box and looked at us with quick, fearless eyes; we took him into the house and tied him up, which he didn't seem to like, being very restless and wild, but most graceful to see. The white fur soon lost its colour, and after a few days it was quite grey. He was beginning to get tame, though still as lively as ever, and proved a valuable and interesting companion for a time, until to our great regret he managed to slip his collar one day, and ran off.

For the last week we have been talking over the advisability of going over to Shannon Island for more meat and various articles of equipment, but nothing has come of it as yet, for it is frightfully cold. The mercury is frozen in the thermometer—has been for nearly the whole of January, which does not encourage one to start off sledging, even though the weather is fine. On the 25th, however, we start, being induced to do so, if the truth must be told, by the filthy state of the house.

Standing outside, we look out over the snow, white and clean in the daylight, until the cold forces us to seek shelter indoors, and then the contrast is overwhelming.

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A dark and dingy little room, faintly lighted for a few square feet in the centre by a smoky lamp, and the two red rays from the ventilator in the stove. That is all the light there is, and as for cleanliness—it is difficult to keep a house clean when the house consists of one room, doing duty as kitchen, bedroom, dining-room and workshop, the whole only twelve feet across. We sit on our bunks, which are made of old provision-cases packed together and covered with skins, and contemplate with disapproval the state of our habitation. There is a heap of ashes under the stove, the floor is covered with bits of paper, shavings of wood and other rubbish, while a pool of water by the door marks where the snow continually makes its way in. On my table—a provision-case, with a smaller box to serve as a chair—is a miscellaneous litter of things, while the kitchen table—likewise a packing-case—is covered with pots and pans and plates and tins; in a word, all that belongs to the housekeeping department. And in between the various boxes that serve as bed or table, lie skins and sledge outfit, open cases, everything which we cannot leave outside. And this we call our home! How greatly must we have changed in all our habits and manners, since we can put up with it. The ideas of cleanliness and comfort which under normal conditions are inseparable from the place where one lives, and has one's shelter and retreat, have been gradually undermined by the life up here, and, as a rule, we are well content with this house that is our castle.

To-day, however, the contrast is overwhelming, and there rises before us a picture of our own real home, with the result that we make an attempt, as we have done once or twice before, to get the place into some sort of decent order. We start in with a will, hauling everything out of the corners for a thorough spring-cleaning, but after an hour's work our enthusiasm has abated—what is the good?

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—it will be just as bad again to-morrow. We sweep up the worst of the ashes and rubbish, throw it all outside, and then sit down to admire our handiwork. I am inclined to be proud of the house now swept and garnished, but only once have I ever ventured to boast of it to Iversen. That was just before Christmas, when we had been cleaning up, and I asked him if it didn't look fine. "H'm," was the doubtful answer, "looks rather like a badly-swept-out stable!" This was discouraging, I felt, and ever since I have carefully refrained from asking his opinion.

It is long now since we had the place properly turned out, and we sit with our hands in our laps, staring at the unholy mess, and wondering where to begin. It looks such a hopeless muddle. Suddenly a bright idea occurs to me—suppose we went off now and left the place to clean itself? We can always clean up when we get back; it will be light then.

The weather is clear and bright, and there is not a cloud in the sky. The barometer is steady, and it looks as if we might reckon on a few fine days. I ask Iversen what he thinks about going up to Shannon Island to fetch some musk ox meat. He also jumps at the chance of getting out of the spring-cleaning, and is only anxious on account of the cold. However, both being of one mind as regards the desire to escape an uncongenial task, we decide to face the cold, and by bed-time—eight o'clock—that night, we have packed three days' provisions, cleaned and filled the oil-stove, and put up a reserve of petroleum, which, with the cooking things, a bag of extra stockings and some odds and ends, completes our equipment.

Next day we start. Very soon, however, we have occasion to regret our hasty decision, for the sledge is big and awkward, and the snow so deep and soft between the high pressure ridges that we often have to take it up in standing hauls, even digging it out now and then when it

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has got into some particularly difficult hole. The sweat pours off us, in spite of the cold; panting and groaning we curse the heavy sledge, and at every halt we are almost perished with cold. And all this to escape spring-cleaning! We heartily wish we had stayed at home, but we are in for it now, and are paying dearly for our laziness. The first night is cruel; it is so cold that we are unable to sleep, in spite of the fact that we are lying fully dressed, wrapped in blankets, and packed away in our sleeping bags of reindeer skin. All night we lie there shivering, making much pious comment on the country which for us, at any rate, is a prison.

A night of this is not the best sort of preparation for a day's hard hauling, and when next morning brings a biting wind, right in our faces, the task is almost beyond our strength. We haul as well as we can, I tugging in front, and Iversen pushing behind, but our wrists, as well as nose and ears, cheeks and chin, are continually freezing white. Every few minutes we are obliged to stop and rub the numbed and frozen parts until they grow a deep, dull red. So often are we forced to repeat this manoeuvre that the skin wears thin. The wind increases, and it is soon blowing a gale, the open water is close on our lee, and there is some danger of our being carried out to sea. But a temperature of under thirty-eight degrees, a stiff breeze, and driving snow, make sledging most infernally cruel work, and we prefer to camp where we are and take our chance, rather than go on. The work of pitching the tent reminds us forcibly how frozen we are, and it is a long time before we can get the thing up. But this is nothing compared with the job of lighting the stove. The petroleum is frozen, and the opening stopped up—our best friend has failed us. At last, however, when we are on the edge of despair, we manage to get the thing going, and a mug of scalding coffee goes far towards picking us up, after which we fall into the

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deep sleep of exhaustion, and do not notice that the wind is subsiding.

When we wake up it is almost calm, the ice has held, and we start off cheerfully once more, in the moonlight. Moonlight is generally regarded as romantic and poetical—we, however, do not care so much for it up here. All the outlines of the country seem to melt into something fantastic and unfamiliar, and when daylight at last comes to our relief, we discover that we have got out of our course, and are moving almost at right-angles to our true direction. Iversen seems to find this very funny—for it is my boast that I cannot lose my way. But the journey soon becomes anything but funny—hour after hour we toil forward, the moon pales in the growing daylight, the sky to the southward turns glowing gold, fringing the edges of the clouds with light, then it fades out again, and the golden glow has almost disappeared by the time we reach the house, after nine hours' heavy hauling. We are delighted at the prospect of a cup of hot coffee in a cosy shelter, and the little shed seems to us the acme of comfort and pleasant security.

But others have evidently found the place attractive besides ourselves. From far and near the fauna of the countryside have gathered to feast upon the musk ox meat hung outside the house. The snow is full of fresh tracks, and it seems as though fox and bear had been executing a dance of triumph among the remains. Up on the hill behind the house a couple of foxes stand, barking angrily at us, the disturbers of the feast. We have no time to go after them with a gun and present our bill for damages, for it looks as though some animal had been burgling the house itself. A bear has been up on the roof and chewed the chimney flat, another—or possibly the same one—has taken up its quarters in a snow-hill close by. With anxious hearts we break open the door and enter the house.

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Our fears now prove unfounded, however, as far as the house itself is concerned; all is as we left it last autumn, save that the walls are decorated with a coating of fine ice crystals, which fall down on us in little showers at the slightest touch.

Here at any rate we can find warmth and shelter against the wind. In a very short time the cold is banished, the stove is glowing red, and the ice crystals are transformed to drops of water which gather into little streams, trickling down the walls—or, what is worse, lying in wait for us to expose a joint in our armour, and pouncing upon the tiniest opening through which the ice-cold water can find its way to our skins. We pay no heed to this discomfort, however, for the present, being busily occupied with the preparation of hot coffee to thaw our frozen inner man.

Then we begin our housekeeping duties. Iversen looks after the cooking of our dinner—big, juicy steaks of musk ox—while I sweep the water from the walls with a broom. This done, it is possible to move without wincing at the unexpected shock of the icy drops, and then the work of chopping wood begins. Cases are hacked to pieces—we are going to get warm this evening, at any rate, and we feel we deserve it, after the last three days of biting cold.

The foxes have again ventured down to the house, and stand and stare at us with their heads on one side, and their sharp eyes twinkling, every time we go to the door for anything. They are pretty creatures, and we cannot find it in our hearts to shoot them; after all, they aren't doing us any harm, and their barking sounds quite cheerful and encouraging every time I cease my chopping.

It is a noisy business, chopping wood on the floor of a house that is built on stone supports, and I can hear nothing above the din of my own work—until suddenly there comes a heavy, scraping sound from outside. I wonder idly what it can be, but go on with my chopping, while Iversen leaves his pots and pans to go and see what is the matter.

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"What is it?" I ask between strokes. Back comes the answer, "Did you ever hear such cheek! Hanged if he isn't trying to break in." Who "he" may be is not stated, but a couple of seconds later I am standing by Iversen's side, staring at a bear not twenty paces off.

It is our tenant from the snow-hill, irritated by the noise, who has come out to investigate. As we open the door, he turns, and after a moment's hesitation, decides to take the supper the gods thus unexpectedly provide, and prepares to attack.

I spring back hastily, without waiting to take in details, but with a sort of mental snapshot of a big, white, furry lump with shining teeth and flashing eyes, gliding silently and swiftly towards me.

In a moment we have shut and bolted the door, and Iversen puts his back against it to further bar the entrance against our most unwelcome guest. We are not exactly prepared for surprise visits of this sort. He has but one shot in his gun, and mine is empty; both are frozen, and it is doubtful if we can get them thawed in time.

We are determined to make Bruin pay dearly for his supper, however. An axe is a first-rate weapon at close quarters; I snatch one up as I pass, clamber over the heap of cases, and get hold of my rifle.

I manage to get the breech open, but it will not close again, the cartridge sticks halfway in, and while Iversen still backs manfully against the door, the bear hammering on the other side all the time, I make ungentle efforts to coerce that cartridge with an axe. It has got to go in, but even in my haste and excitement I am aware that it is a foolhardy thing to do, and am half expecting the thing to go off any minute. Fortunately, however, at this point our importunate visitor outside suddenly desists from the attack, and we hurry to the stove to warm the rifles.

A moment or two later he is there again, however.

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Iversen springs to the door, calling, "Are you ready?" But I am anything but ready, the rifle is not thawed yet. With two shots we reckon ourselves a match for any bear, but one is a risky business. Bruin, however, has no sportsmanlike scruples about waiting till we are ready, he is hungry, and as we still refuse to open, he is evidently determined to break in.

A mighty thump of his heavy paw settles the matter. Iversen is flung half across the room, upsetting the caboose with pots, pans, dinner and all, the whole falling with a crash to the floor. Next moment he is on his feet again, at my side, his rifle still in his hand.

We glance at each other without speaking. There in the doorway, with its forepaws on the threshold, is the bear, staring open-mouthed and dribbling in astonishment at the strange cave which it has broken into. Never have I seen such utter consternation in the eyes of any beast. We have taken up our position as far back as possible, Iversen with his rifle at the ready, and I with my half-useless weapon in one hand and an axe raised in the other.

A sharp click breaks the anxious silence as Iversen cocks his gun. Now it is time for Bruin to say his prayers—next moment the cabin is filled with a thundering roar.

My eyes are fixed on the bear. His great white chest shivers at the shot, a few drops of blood appear, but still he stands there in the doorway, as though petrified with astonishment. Then suddenly he decides to retreat, runs a few steps, stumbles over the sledge, and sinks in a heap to the ground. The fight is over, victory is ours, and the unbidden guest has paid dearly for his impertinence. But all that evening we sit up cleaning our guns—we do not want a repetition of this adventure.

Next day we try our weapons—they are in perfect order now, and the bears may come as soon as they like, and bring their friends, the more the merrier. For a few days

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we have quite a lively time, the whole of the county comes to call, and we receive the visits of a couple of bears, a wolf or so, and any amount of foxes. The wolves are shy, and keep a respectful distance, but the bears, considering themselves as the original owners of the land, are not to be put out of countenance by a couple of parvenus like ourselves, and come marching down in stately majesty. They get off with a fright, however, and a single bullet-graze; it is difficult to judge one's distances while the sun is below the horizon.

The weather is perfectly calm now—has been for some days, and in spite of the bitter cold, so fine and clear that we cannot resist the temptation to go out and have a look at the wonderful effects produced by the light of the still-hidden sun upon the clouds. It is almost more beautiful now than later, for once the sun is above the horizon, the light is sharper, and the warm golden glow disappears. But we have no sort of sentimental regrets on this point, we shall be only too glad to see the sun once more, better than all the most beautiful colour is the clear sunlight, and the knowledge that spring has begun.

The first year we were here, we were pleased enough to see the sun return, we nodded cheerfully to it as one nods to a friend. Twelve months later we were delighted beyond all measure to see the blood-red disc once more, but this time we feel inclined to worship it.

We stand out on the farthest little knoll, as far to the south as we can, and wait in silence, with our eyes fixed on the horizon, which is perfectly clear. Before us lies a dull white sea, soon to be lit and coloured by the first rays of the sun. Southward the sky is all aflame, a thin reddish mist hangs over the sea—fiercer still grow the flames in the sky to the south—then the mist is pierced by an arrow of light, showing our haggard faces in a weird, unnatural pallor, and tinging the snow with rose. The sun is come.

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We sit in silence, looking at it all, and thinking of the land where all the year the sun is in the sky. It seems like a message from the milder south, from all our friends on whom this same sun shines—who knows?—perhaps some are gazing at it just now. Not with such feeling as we, however—and it seems to us strange that there should be people for whom the sun is just an ordinary thing of every day, instead of the divine and wonderful being we almost worship now. For half-an-hour we sit there, pondering upon these and other things, not least the question—is it the last time we shall see the sun's return, or are we doomed to yet another winter here?

Again the sky flames up away to the south, again the fiery mist—then colours fade, we bid the sun good-bye until to-morrow, for now—wonderful thought—it is to be there every day.

With a load of 600 pounds on the sledge we start on our way back to Bass Rock. It is slow and heavy going, we have to wait for the wind, and it takes us four days to cover the distance. And now we commence the preparations for our long journey to Angmasalik. We work away briskly, and idle dreams are banished—until evening, when we sit and talk of all the wonderful things that await us in the mighty city—as it seems to us—of Angmasalik, where there are real, live people, and ships and business, and all the delights of civilisation.

We have a new fox now, a little sprightly thing. We did not catch him, he simply came along of his own accord and adopted us, so to speak. After the incident of the bear we had grown a little nervous, and when we got back to the house at Bass Rock, it startled me a bit to hear Iversen suddenly cry "Halt!" I turned on the instant, in time to see him snatch up his gun in feverish haste, and close beside us something which in the half dark looked like a bear.

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Iversen raises his weapon, but at the same moment we discover that it is only a fox after all. The little creature comes up and sniffs at us, backs away again and stands looking up into our faces with his head on one side, and such a winning expression of confidence and relationship that we fall in love with him on the spot. Satisfied with his examination, and evidently assured that we are both decent sorts, the little fellow marches gravely up in front of us to the house, where he has evidently been living for some time. Ever since then he has been our faithful retainer, always keeping within hail, and running up to take bits of meat from our hand like a dog. He has learned to find his way about the house, he knows where the margarine casks stand, and the rubbish heap, and where we keep our store of meat; where he may go and where not. In a word, our little friend is soon an excellent house-fox, answering to the name of "Prut."

Towards the end of February we have got everything ready for our journey to the south, but we must first make a trial trip as far as Walrus Island to see how it goes, as we are not at all sure about our equipment, which is far from perfect. We are out for seven days, and it is bitterly cold; it is impossible to haul more than half the load which we must have with us, and even then it is such heavy work that we are forced to give up the idea of making our escape that way. There remains the boat—we must see what can be done with that.

For the time being, however, we are obliged to lie up, as we are both ill after the trip to Walrus Island. For fourteen days we stay indoors, while the wind howls outside; it seems as though the winter had been saving up its storms till now. The gale roars among the cliffs, and shakes the house, but we are comfortable enough in our cosy shelter, where we sit and talk of human beings. We have come to the conclusion that there must be some of our fellow-

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creatures on the coast not very far away, for we have been visited by foxes which have been in captivity. I make the discovery one day, on going out to look at the weather. Happening to glance at the track of a fox close to where I am standing, I start in astonishment; beside the footmarks runs a little fine line cut in the snow—the mark of a string which the fox must have had round its neck!

Iversen hurries out in answer to my call. "What do you make of that?" He glances at the track. "It's Prut"—but on looking closer, he also discovers the mark of the string, and his eyes grow big with surprise—"It's been tied up!" We at once commence investigations, but discover nothing, and greatly mystified, we go back to the house to talk matters over. We have had two foxes in captivity besides Prut, and now there are three of them at once—where did the third one come from? All day we sit staring out of the window, watching for foxes with a string about their neck, and evolve the most wonderful theories. We talk of nothing but these strangers whom we now expectantly await, and in the evening the subject is further discussed as we lie in our bunks, till the unsolved problem haunts us even in our dreams.

We are expecting every moment the arrival of a fox with a message from these people whom we are certain are living somewhere on the coast; the trap is set, and we wait in keen anxiety of expectation. We have prepared a message ready to tie round the neck of the first fox we catch, and have already in our imagination established postal connection with the outer world. For a whole week we wait, filled with this wonderful new hope, thinking of fellow-creatures not far off—a delightful dream, from which, however, we are rudely awakened.

It is Iversen who hits on the only reasonable solution of the mystery. We are lying in our bunks one evening, talking of foxes caught by men, and the men who caught

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the foxes, when he breaks off suddenly: "I say, there can't be anything wrong with our senses?" This is a point of view which has not occurred to me, and comes as somewhat of a surprise: I ask him whether he means to suggest that we are going off our heads. The expression seemed to strike him as somewhat too strong—it wasn't exactly that, he meant, but—"Hang it all, I mean—well, one's heard of people sometimes *seeing* things—things that aren't there, you know." This was too much for me, there was something irresistibly comical in the idea of our sitting there solemnly trying to reckon out if we were off our heads or not, and I burst out laughing. Iversen was offended. "Oh, you're beastly clever, aren't you!" and he turned over on his side.

But he was right, we had been finding mare's nests. As we caught the foxes we discovered that they were our old lodgers from last winter, while "Prut" was one we had never seen before. But our existence suddenly becomes horribly empty, now that we no longer have these imagined fellow-beings to think of. The affair, however, has done some good after all, it has kept our minds occupied for nearly a month, and cheered us up while we were ill, and even though the awakening is something of an anti-climax, we have had something out of the illusion while it lasted.

In April we go up to the winter haven with the sledge, and have a try at the boat. This also, however, we are obliged to give up, as we have not the strength to haul it. There is nothing to be done but sledge down to Bass Rock again, and sit and wait in idleness, unbearable idleness, until a ship comes along.

If only we had something to occupy our thoughts! But now that our plans of making our escape by ourselves have come to nothing, we fall back upon our daydreams of the winter—the postcards are again called into service as a link with the outer world, and the picture of the girls from the

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cookery school is still the finest item on the programme. We have brought back from Shannon Island some pictures from an old illustrated paper—mostly street scenes from Copenhagen, some of them with real trees. In the place of honour opposite the door we have stuck up a big two-page illustration, "Four generations of royalty." It makes a highly decorative effect, with all the other pictures round it. The place really begins to look cheerful, and we cock our heads on one side and feel quite proud of ourselves. But darker thoughts possess us, we have still in our minds the eternal question—Will there come a ship this year? It is May now, the sparrows are chirping outside, the gulls scream as they wheel and circle in the air, the sun is up the whole day long—summer is all delightful, if only we were sure of coming home.

As in the winter, we keep our thoughts as far as possible in the background—talking incessantly, even though we have nothing in the world to talk about. The figures of our dreams become once more realities, our fancy runs unchecked, we talk and talk with no other thought than to keep on talking, for silence means the endless anxiety of waiting. The time is near when we can expect a ship, the time that last September seemed so hopelessly far away. We do our best to encourage each other, but it is no easy matter, for deep in the mind of each is the thought, Will it come? There came no ship last year—we may be cheated of our deliverance again. And can we live through yet another winter here?

However, all things considered, prospects are not so bad. The pack ice is slack, and there is open water—though this is deceptive, for it may be different farther out at sea. We cannot see any great distance from a height of 600 feet.

We go out every day with our guns, and shoot a good many hares; we must have meat for the summer, and it keeps us occupied as long as we are out. We are obliged to

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find things to do to make the long days pass, to keep ourselves from the irritating whirl of vain speculation. There is not much that we can do, however, and as a last resource we hit upon the idea of clearing the snow away. We dig long lanes and passages through the snow-hills, and manage to make things look quite neat and orderly outside the house, ready for the time when we may have to receive visitors. Each night we are glad to note one more day gone—only they go so very slowly !

Each day we climb up on the cliffs to look at the ice. It still looks promising, and in moments of enthusiasm we discuss the possibility of a ship arriving in June, but it is rarely we touch upon that subject, for as the time approaches when we may expect a ship, our fear that none may come increases.

The snow is melting now, and there is water everywhere, the grass is green, and there are flowers, the birds of passage have arrived for their brief visit; it is the time we have waited for so long.

And the days go on, one just like another, all wearily long, and always the same striving to occupy our thoughts with the present or the past, anything but the painful doubt of the future. The possibilities are too awful. And yet we cannot help following in our minds the ships that now may be on their way towards us—we see them entering the ice, striving to get through to land—they should soon be able to reach us now, if it is no worse out there than what we can see here close in to land. Or we follow the movements of a single ship—to-day it has reached the ice, and each day it comes nearer—we let it lie up when fogs or storm hinder its passage, until at last the day comes when it should have been here, if it had entered the ice on the day we fancied it there. A mad existence—another year of this would be too much for us.

Now all the snow has gone and the running water stopped.

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It is impossible to leave Bass Rock now, for the ice is full of cracks and pools of water. We are prisoners upon this little patch of rock, but still we climb up as before, spending the most of our time gazing out over the sea, and waiting. The land ice goes—breaking up and drifting away to southward, floe after floe goes floating away, and we wish for our boat, that we might follow—anything rather than this ceaseless waiting.

We sit out on the farthest point of rock, looking at the water lapping against its foot. It is a fine day, warm and bright, without a cloud in the sky, and all about looks fair and kindly. But the flowers are gone, the sun is declining and soon the autumn will be here with its boisterous gales. It is a lovely scene, but it is rarely that we care to talk now of the beauty of the scenery; we sit in silence, looking out over the sea.

A whirr of wings in the air wakes us from our dreams: it is a flock of guillemots that have their home on the cliffs, and are now making for the water. So happily they splash about down there—and how we envy them! The gun lies ready between us, the birds are good eating, and it is always something to do. Moreover, we need meat. The guillemots shall die. Cautiously we creep along the shore to get within range, but the little black birds disarm us after all, we cannot find it in our hearts to shoot them. It is cheering to have some few living things about us, we sit on a stone and look at them; their young ones are waiting for them up on the cliff, they will die of hunger if their parents do not return—and we know what hunger is; no, let them live! Besides, there may come a ship—and then it would be a pity. We can wait until to-morrow, all sorts of things may have happened by then.

We are well paid for having spared them by the feeling of quiet content which takes possession of us as we sit there watching the happy little creatures. At last they

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fly off, and we feel quite sorry they are gone. Well, it is getting near our bedtime too; we may as well go back to the house and turn in.

Half-an-hour later we are lying in our sleeping bags, and have said good-night to each other, repeating once more the old refrain, "Who knows—there may be a ship to-morrow!" And as I lie there, my eyes wander over the wall of the cabin—there is the picture of the four generations, there the street scenes from Copenhagen, and then a little empty space, always the first and last I see. There was a picture there once, a little card with the woods of Frederiksdal, so green and splendid—but I had to take it down, it was too painful. I burnt the card, but I could not burn the place where it had hung, and the empty space grins at me now, as if to say, "Do you remember?" And I remember all too well, it was a foolish thing to burn the card, for the empty place is worse. "Coward," it seems to say, "you dare not think of the future, you dare not hope ever to reach home again!"

Soon all is still in the house, and we sleep. Suddenly I am wakened by the noise of a case upset outside, and as I open my eyes, there is Iversen dashing across the room, bare-legged, with nothing on but a striped jersey, and with a wild look in his eyes. A bear! is my first thought, and in a moment I am out of my bunk, seize my gun, and am about to follow, but before I have got halfway, I stop, petrified with astonishment—Iversen has got the door open, and is crying "Morning—good-morning!"

God—a ship at last! In a moment I am standing beside my faithful comrade, staring at a host of men—an endless army of men—the whole shore is full of men.

What happened next I do not know. We put some clothes on, I suppose, but there is a blank spot in my memory, and the next thing I remember is that Iversen has disappeared, and going out to look for him, I find

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him standing on a rock, waving his cap and shouting, "A ship! a ship! a ship!"

With a bound I am at his side. True enough, out there where we have never seen anything but water and ice, a little steamer is lying. We look at each other with bright eyes, and do not know what to say. It is eight-and-twenty months since we last saw a human face. Then we go up behind the house, where nobody can see us, and shake hands—hard. We have been through a rough time together, and now it is over. A moment we stand holding each other's hands, then Iversen bursts out suddenly—"I say—I'm glad we didn't shoot those guillemots yesterday—jolly little things!"

Then we go down to the others, who had been so startled at our first appearance that they had actually run away. It seems as if we had never seen so many people all at once; it looks like an army—and there are only eight of them. They are quite pleased to see us now, but at the first meeting, Lillenæs, who was standing with his back to the door, sprang into the air with astonishment when Iversen opened it. We must have given him a shock, I dare not say a fright, for we learned later that this bold seaman had captured a musk ox once, off his own bat.

Another of them, the steward, dashed back down the shore as fast as his legs could carry him. He thought we were dangerous lunatics, and, indeed, we must have made a queer figure, with our bushy hair and beards, striped jerseys, and nothing more.

They tell us the news of the world. First we learn of the death of the King—the men spied his picture on the wall, and one said laconically—"Well, he's dead and gone now!" They tell us of the *Titanic*, and the many souls that drowned, of Italy, now at war with Turkey, or Egypt, or the Hottentots—they are not quite sure. They tell us a whole lot of things, we don't hear half of all they

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say, but go round shaking hands with each of them in turn.

All our things have been packed up long since, and in a trice our rescuers have stowed away all the remaining provisions in the house. The door is fastened, we get into the boat, and are rowed swiftly across to the ship by four men, all pulling lustily, and anxious to tell their comrades the great news.

The vessel is a Norwegian steamer, *Sjøblomsten*, and the captain, Paul Lillenæs, sits beside us, trying his kindly best to answer all our questions, but we have so much to ask that it is impossible to tell us all we want to know.

Soon we fetch up alongside, and Iversen speaks for us both as he exclaims—"Good Lord, there's more of them—look!" For there are four more men standing by the railing, highly interested at the prospect of receiving visitors.

The engine-room telegraph clangs, and *Sjøblomsten* gets under way, while Iversen and I stand on deck looking idiotically happy—now the third and last stage of our journey has begun—the voyage home to civilisation. First, however, we are going up to Shannon Island—it is only a couple of hours' run—to get some more things on board, and then back southward along the coast—southward and home. We pass Bass Rock and round a point; Iversen and I, who are standing at the stern, each with a big pipe puffing like the funnel itself, look long at our little house, where after all we were happy in a way! Here, somehow or other, we find it necessary to shake hands again—strange, that it should be such a relief to the thoughts one cannot very well put into words.

We keep on to the southward—putting in to Gael Hamkes Bay on the chance of finding game, for *Sjøblomsten* is out for seal, and as we cruise about in the splendid sunshine,

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our minds are full of one splendid thought—we are bound for home at last.

Nothing comes of the hunting this time, however, and we put out again. Behind us lies Greenland, and ahead the fulfilment of two years' dreams, but our delight is not unmixed with some anxiety—will all things be as we left them?—so very much may happen in three years!

The ship ploughs steadily along—there is no ice to speak of, and Iversen and I stand once more on the stern, gazing out over the blue of the land. Soon it will disappear, and we must have one more look at Greenland, where we have seen so much hardship and, after all, so many joys.

There is a swishing of ice as it rises and falls, the swell reaches us—we are standing now in the forepart of the ship looking out at the dark sky. Not far now to the open sea—and soon the ice is left behind. Southwards we go, under steam and sail, we pass Jan Mayen's Island—wonderful thought, the next land we sight will be the rocky coast of Norway.

These are pleasant days. We smoke, and eat potatoes, and the time passes quickly enough, even after we have used up all the crew's tobacco, and eaten their last potato—no matter, we can soon get more. We pass other steamers, see a sail now and then away to the northwards, and then one splendid morning we get our first sight of land. It is green and bright—then white spots appear on the green—little white houses—and soon we are in among the outer fringe of rocks. Small boats are moving about—there is one with something red and white on it, and Iversen comes up to me—“Look, look there—a girl!”

A whirl of varied impression, all new and strange to us now. Ships and houses and churches, and little boats with real people in, a bell buoy, and then a mighty town—the harbour—and the end of our voyage. *Sjøblomsten* edges in to her berth, all is crowd and bustle and confusion. And as

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we move past the front of a big warehouse, there stand two fisher girls on the quay and stare in wonder at the two strange creatures on board.

Boats come out, and in them a journalist and an outfitter—the last-named also eager for business. Soon we get ashore, to feel once more the earth of the civilised world under our feet.

There are people on the quay, for the rumour of our arrival has spread. More and more come running—what a lot of people there are in the world! They stare at us and bid us welcome, and welcome indeed we feel, and have done ever since we met human beings once more.

We march off up the street, followed by a gaping crowd, and run into the arms of a man whose face beams with delight. It is Consul Sandvig, the Danish representative in Aalesund, and from now we are under his care. He takes us home to his house, leads us into a room with real furniture, which emphasises the incongruity of our appearance. We sit down awkwardly, and light a huge cigar, only to jump up next moment—there in the doorway is our host's daughter, with glasses and champagne. "So that's a girl," is my first astonished thought—then recollecting myself, I wipe my hand carefully on my trousers and bid her good-day.

Ten days ago in Greenland, a savage creature, frightened at his thoughts—now in a prettily furnished room, with a kindly host and a beautiful girl—one and the same man it is true, but all confused at the overwhelming change of surroundings.

And while we are sitting trying to "find ourselves," in the Consul's hospitable house, the telegraph is busy. Message after message is sped on its way, then a little pause, and the stream begins to flow back. Telegrams come in—the first is from his Majesty the King—and then a host of other congratulations on our return.

It is all wonderful beyond words. We recollect the

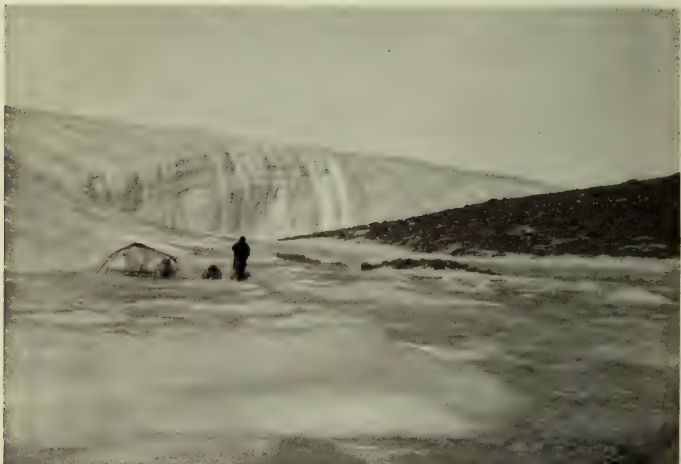


CAPTAIN MIKKELSEN AND ENGINEER IVERSEN AFTER TWENTY-EIGHT MONTHS' ISOLATION

[To face page 378.]



TOILING ALONG THE COAST OF DRONNING LOUISES LAND



A STEEP ICE-WALL OFF DRONNING LOUISES LAND

(To face page 379.)

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existence of a barber—heaven knows we need his services, if ever men did!—And then a bath—real bath in a lovely big bath-tub—a thing we haven't seen for three years, and clean clothes—another half-forgotten luxury—and then we drive off with our friend the Consul to his place in the country, to be most kindly received by his charming family.

Then we begin to get news from home. All is well, and we ourselves in our pleasant surroundings can laugh at the trials and hardships of the last three years.

Three years! And ten days only since the three years ended—strange, how distant and unreal it seems. In that short time the very name of Greenland has faded into something vague and far—the title of a story, wherein are told the things that happened to two men whom we once knew.

CHAPTER XVI

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER

BY LIEUT. W. LAUB

ON the 10th of April Capt. Mikkelsen's sledge party and mine separated. Our object was to follow the west coast of Dronning Louises Land to its southern end, and thence round by south and eastward towards the coast, going down from the inland ice either in Bessel Bay or Ardencable Inlet, and from there on to the ship. In this, however, we did not succeed, owing to the difficult ice and rough weather which we encountered on the way.

After having said good-bye to Mikkelsen and Iversen, wishing them a good journey and a safe return, we retraced our steps to the southward, pitching our tent at five o'clock on the evening of the same day, two camping-places farther on.

It was necessary to drive back, the provisions and equipment for my sledge party having been left behind at our camp of the 6th of April, as we three could thus, by driving with a light sledge, be of more use to our companions of the first party, in helping them forward with their heavy load, which was still, at the time we left them, very considerable.

For two and a half days we were forced to lie up at the same place, a northerly gale and heavy snow making it impossible to move forward, or even see our way. About noon on the 13th of April, however, the wind dropped a

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little, and we at once started off southward, leaving our tent behind. After two and a half hours' sledging we reached our depot, finding everything there in good order. Hastily packing our things on the sledge we turned northwards again, still following our old tracks. It took us until 8.30 that night to reach our tent again, after sledging for the last hour in a stiff breeze. The dogs do not work well against the wind, preferring to creep into shelter behind the sledge.

And here I will mention the names of our dogs; they are after all one's faithful companions on such a journey, and we three grew to be very fond of our beasts, even though they once played us a nasty trick, which, had it happened at a later stage of the journey, might have had serious consequences.

We had six dogs in our team. According to the arrangement made before leaving the ship, the second party was to have what dogs were left over after deducting the fifteen best for the use of the first party, for whom it was, of course, essential to have as good dogs as possible.

There were thus six small dogs left to us, and we were very pleased with them. Their names were "Gogrick," "Karoline," "Kristian," "The Old 'Un," "Gumboil," and "Clown"—names not all particularly beautiful, perhaps, but which we gradually came to regard with affection. Gogrick, as the biggest and cleverest of the lot, was appointed leader, having also shown some capability in that direction, when attached to my team. He did not, however, turn out so well as we had expected, and after about a week had to resign, *vice* Karoline, who, though smaller, proved a good leader. My own leader was among the fifteen chosen for the team going north.

The wind increased almost to a hurricane during the night, and several times we thought the tent was going to be torn away over our heads by the force of the wind. The

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next day, the 14th, was no better; not until the afternoon of the 15th did the wind drop sufficiently to permit of our starting northward again. We still followed our old tracks, which proved a great advantage, owing to the many fissures in the ice.

Our progress, however, was still difficult, and it was evident that we should not get far at this rate. I therefore decided to leave as much clothing as could be spared at this place, reducing our constant weight of load by about fifteen pounds. This was a very welcome relief, and even though we were not so warm at nights, we were yet glad to get rid of the extra weight. Our rate of progress now increased, and we camped on the evening of the 16th on new ground, having struck off from our old route the same morning. A delay of one and a half hours was caused by the Old 'Un, whose trace broke, when he promptly ran off, making for our old camping-place. Olsen was despatched in chase, and did not return until half-past six, having, however, managed to capture the truant.

Our camping-place being now to the north of Dronning Louises Land, we made a halt the next day, partly to take observations and bearings, and partly to examine the ice on ahead. We were now at an altitude of 560 metres above sea-level, and the ice was beginning to slope downwards, in addition to which the sheer wall of a glacier a little distance ahead barred our passage. For the first few miles the ice was fairly good, being at any rate more or less flat, though not exactly smooth, after which it sloped downwards until within a mile of the glacier, where it became so unspeakably bad that we returned to the tent, which we reached at seven o'clock.

Here an unpleasant surprise awaited us. Our dogs were nowhere to be seen as we came up, and we made all sorts of guesses to account for their disappearance. They might, for instance, have made off in a body towards the



SLEDGING THROUGH A NARROW RIVER ON THE INLAND ICE



TAKING THE SLEDGE UP OVER A STEEP ICE-HILL
[To face page 382.]



A LAKE ON THE INLAND ICE



SLEDGING UNDER UNFAVOURABLE CONDITIONS

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land some five miles away, or have fallen into a fissure. All was quiet about the camp, until suddenly we heard Karoline barking angrily, whereupon the others joined in. Even at a distance we could hear that a fight was going on, and as the sound came from the tent, it was evident that the dogs must be inside. Not content with trespassing, they had made free with four days' provision, making a horrible mess all over the tent. Pemmican, vegetables—everything was eaten, and Gogrick was busy with the last of the butter, while Karoline watched him with envious eyes, ready to snatch it away at the first opportunity. We got there first, however, and caught all four of them in the act. Very soon they had something else to think about, for we were not sparing of punishment. It was necessary to give them a lesson; they had eaten four days' valuable provisions, which was a serious matter.

The next day began badly. The wind was against us, and the dogs were lazy after their heavy feed, but the ice, which, as already mentioned, sloped downwards, helped us not a little. It grew more and more rough, however, until at last we could not get the sledge forward, but had to take off half the load, and push on again until within half-a-mile of the glacier. It was impossible to find a passable road forward, so we returned to where we had left our gear, and camped at nine o'clock in the evening, hoping, as usual when we turned in, for a good run next day.

It was not to be, however; we got along fairly well, it is true, and reached the glacier, but in the afternoon the wind got up again—it had been blowing in the morning—and at 8.15 in the evening we camped, both men and dogs tired out.

We expected a storm, and were not disappointed. From the evening of the 18th till noon of the 21st of April we were obliged to remain in our tent.

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The first day's lying-up one always manages to get through more or less comfortably, repairing clothes and gear, etc., but anything beyond that is unpleasant. One lies and tries to sleep, dozes a little, until one of the others begins some yarn or other, and one cannot help listening, although one has heard it many times before. One listens, as a matter of fact, only in order to correct the speaker whenever he makes a mistake, or omits an unimportant detail—for the audience know the story quite as well as he does himself.

Being a little anxious about provisions, we reduced our rations to the half, now that we were not sledging, cutting down the dogs' allowance also.

At last the wind dropped, and we were able to make a start, but the going was the worst we had encountered as yet. Fissure after fissure had to be passed, until we reached the wall of the glacier between Dronning Louises Land and Ymers Nunatak to the north. Here and there a cliff pierced through the glacier, but it was impossible to get up here, the wall being about seventy metres high. We drove down, therefore, on to a little lake which lay close by to the south of us, running right up to the glacier, thinking it might prove possible to get across here in to Dronning Louises Land, and thus up to the higher inland ice. We got down on to the lake all right, and were surprised to find land here, but more so when on driving round along the edge of the glacier we found another lake, lying about thirty metres below the first, being also considerably larger, and full of icebergs. It was a most interesting phenomenon to find lakes on the inland ice, they were frozen, of course, but the effect was less harsh. When we camped in the evening we could almost imagine we were on the banks of a river, and not on the inland ice; which in reality surrounded us on three sides, with Dronning Louises Land on the fourth.

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As regards the land itself, there was a little moss here and there, but no sign of any living thing. We had now to make another ascent up to the inland ice, and here a long coil of rope which we had with us came in very useful. We got our gear up next day in about three and a half hours, leaving, however, a good deal of it behind, and thus further reducing the weight of our load. We divided ourselves into two parties, Poulsen stayed down on the ice, loading up the sledge, while Olsen and I went up the glacier, going round along the land and from there in on to the ice. Here we hitched the dogs to our end of the rope, the other end being made fast to the sledge, and with light loads we managed in this way to haul it up. It did not always keep upright on the runners, appearing as often as not over the edge of the glacier lying on its side. The rope thus did us good service, and we were glad that we had not left it behind as useless weight.

At last we reached the ice we had been longing for, of which we had heard and read so much, and it was high time we did, for our provisions were running short, and we were a long way behindhand on our course, according to our reckoning and estimate. We needed luck to help us through, but this we thought would come all right, now that we had reached the good ice, which, however, sloped stiffly upwards. But we had now had two days' good weather, and were inclined to look at the bright side of things—a very human failing after all. Two days of storm and snow convinced us of our error. Sledging was impossible—we tried it once when the gale abated a little on the 24th, but were obliged to give it up again, and not until seven o'clock on the evening of the 25th could we strike our tent and start off westward again, still, however, with a stiff breeze which neither we nor the dogs found pleasant. Finally we had to camp again at two in the morning, having made about ten miles.

We could not go on like this; we were using up our food,

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and getting no farther forward, the dogs were growing slacker and slacker, hauling half-heartedly at the traces. Another two days' storm made things worse—it almost seemed that we were not to get round by the west at all. We did not give up hope as yet, however; for three days we drove S.W. and S., the land falling to the southwards now, but all the time with uphill going and the wind dead against us.

By the 1st of May we had got down along the west coast as far as about Lat. 77° N. and could see that the land fell southwards. S.W.S. and S.S.W. we could see the tops of some nunataks sticking up out of the ice at a distance of about twenty and forty miles respectively.

We climbed up to the top of one of the islands, of which the west coast—as far as we went—consists, and saw far out over the land, which was nothing but mountain tops and hollows, these being up to about 400–500 metres above the surface of the inland ice. We had been considering the possibility of going right across the land, which would save us about seventy miles, but it turned out to be too risky to go down into these hollows, it being moreover impossible to see where they led, as the mountain tops rose steeply from the ice and partly obstructed our view. This day then, we began our return journey over the same route by which we had come, now, however, with but five dogs, Kristian having been killed as food for the rest. This we had been obliged to do, in order to make our dog-feed last for the rest of the trip. We had now, from the point where we turned back, about 215 miles between us and the *Alabama*—and provisions for twelve days. We had thus no margin left for lying up, as we should have to make an average run of eighteen miles per day. A fine breeze at our backs, however, helped us along a good deal. We were now sure of always having the wind with us, and could thus sledge in far rougher weather than before.

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During the first night, however, the wind increased to such hurricane force, with quantities of snow, that we were forced to keep to the tent for two days. Here we had the misfortune to lose one of our dogs, Clown, who died, whether of cold or fatigue it is impossible to say. We found him lying unconscious in the snow on the second day of the storm, and after having rubbed some warmth into his body, we took him into the tent. Once inside, he opened his eyes and looked at us mournfully, as though to say, "You may as well let me die, I'm no good any more." We could see the poor beast was in pain, and thinking that some hot food might do him good, we gave him some of our warm pemmican, and managed to persuade him to eat a little, after which Poulsen took him into his sleeping bag, warming him up and trying artificial respiration when he threatened to fall into stupor again.

After lying with his eyes closed for half-an-hour, he opened them suddenly, as if to say good-bye to us; a shiver passed through his body, and Clown was dead, freed from the trials and hardship which are the lot of a sledge-dog on an expedition.

It may sound strange, perhaps, but the fact that Clown died right in our midst, literally speaking in our arms, made a deep impression on us all. We had naturally been angry with him often enough, when he danced about and tangled up his traces, or wouldn't pull properly—wearied out as he was—but now we felt that we had lost a faithful companion, and there was silence in the tent for an hour after he died; none of us felt like saying anything.

But sentiment must give way to practical needs in the Arctic; we could not afford to bury him, and a couple of hours later he was cut up into rations for the four remaining dogs.

On the 4th of May it was still blowing. We dared not wait longer, however, but started off, with the wind at our

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backs and downhill going, avoiding the steep glacier by keeping well to the north. The sledge, however, came out of it rather badly, both runners being cut to pieces, and we were forced to halt at six in the evening for repairs. We succeeded at last in fastening my ski underneath to serve as runners, but it was a lengthy business, as the shoeing from the old runners had to be transferred to the ski before these could be fixed. We had another disaster the same evening, I having the misfortune to burn a hole six inches square in the tent cover, through carelessly leaving the stove unwatched. The canvas cover of the sledge supplied the material for a patch, and I had the pleasure of sitting up after bed-time to fit it on.

Next day we struck our old tracks again in the afternoon, and reached the depot the same evening. We were glad to get there, for the improvised runners were already quite worn out, and we had left a pair of snow-runners behind here on the way up. These were accordingly utilised as sledge-runners, but it was evident now that we must run the sledge with the greatest care if we were to get it home at all, for it was in a very shaky condition. We found it best to drive it stern first, and drove in this way for the rest of the journey.

Yet another mishap occurred while we were on the inland ice. Poulsen had a bad attack of snow-blindness, and for two days was unable to see at all, but had to walk beside the sledge all the time, holding on to the side. It was a very painful method of progression for himself, and also for us; time and again he stumbled and fell over on his face, when we in our eagerness to get on forgot to warn him of holes and hummocks in the way.

We had now got down on to the lower inland ice, and made but slow progress with the wearied dogs, now growing rapidly weaker on their daily ration of sixty ounces of pemmican. In spite of the fact that the three of us helped

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them with our hauling-straps—which by the way we had been doing all along—it proved impossible to get up to the eighteen miles a day, and in addition to this we had also to lie up on the homeward journey.

Not until the 10th of May did we make our descent from the inland ice, at the same spot where we had gone up. It was now very evident that summer was approaching; there were a number of streams on the ice, and even the glacier had changed, part of it having broken off. The temperature had also risen, being now 3° C. and in the sun 6° C. From the place where we made the descent we had now 125 miles to the ship, and to reach it with the provision that remained to us was obviously impossible, while I had no confidence in the chances of finding game. We could of course reach the ship by drawing on the depots laid down for Capt. Mikkelsen, but the whole of his expedition was based upon the existence of these, and it was doubtful whether we could manage to bring up further supplies before the ice broke up. I therefore decided to make for Danmarks Havn, which was only fifty miles away, and where we should find provisions.

At noon on the 14th of May we rounded the western point of the harbour, and reached Danmarks Havn, after a heavy journey across the deep, soft snow of Dove Bay. Both ourselves and the dogs were then badly in need of food. It took us two hours' hard work to clear away the snow from the door, but we got in at last, made a fire and had a meal, after which we turned in and slept till late next morning, when we got up to eat, and promptly turned in again. It was a real treat to lie in a dry sleeping bag once more, and eat as much as we wanted, while the dogs went about with their tails in the air—a sure sign of content.

For two days we lived luxuriously at Danmarks Havn; we could not stay longer, not daring to use more than was absolutely necessary of the provisions. On the evening of the 16th we started off again, with the dogs in good condition,

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and eight days' food on the sledge. The last we saw of Danmarks Havn was the cross pointing to the north—the monument raised in memory of Mylius Erichsen, Høeg Hagen and Brönlund—standing out sharp and clear against the background of mountains, lit by the sun from the north-west.

Then the whole was wiped out by the fog, which came rolling down from the open water east of Cape Bismarck. Following our old tracks, we moved slowly down to Dove Bay and on to the ship.

On the way down to Haystack we encountered a lot of bottomless fissures running east and west. We passed them without mishap; once we were forced to turn right in to land on the north side of Bessel Bay, but we got along somehow.

As we neared the ship, we began to talk about the good time we were to have on board, with our two comrades, who had been there for nearly three months, and when we started out from our last camp on the evening of the 22nd of May, with only twenty-five miles to go, we agreed to take the rest of the way without a stop.

Driving over the land about the bay on the north coast of Shannon Island we could see from the fresh tracks that Unger had been here quite recently, and we hurried on the sledge. The weight of our load had been increased during the last two days by the addition of two of the dogs, Gumboil and The Old 'Un, who were now so worn out with fatigue and exhaustion that they could no longer drag themselves along. We could not find it in our hearts to shoot them so near home, they deserved to have a good time after the hard work they had done, and, moreover, we might yet need their services.

Gradually the distance between us and the glacier decreased; when we passed it, we should sight the ship. At twelve o'clock we rounded the glacier, and saw two masts down by the little point. The glass was called into requisition



THE HOURLY REST



BREAKING UP THE "ALABAMA"

(To face page 390.)



SLEDGING ACROSS COUNTRY WHILE WAITING FOR MIKKELSEN AND IVERSEN



OLSEN OUTSIDE OUR WOODEN HUT

[To face page 391.]

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tion—what could this mean ? Another ship ? Impossible, it was too early in the year. It was a heavy blow when I realised the truth. I stood there for a long time staring through the glass without saying a word. At last Olsen broke the silence : “ She’s gone down,” he said. It was but too true.

All sorts of possibilities of disaster crossed our minds during the last half-hour before we reached the *Alabama*. Where were Jørgensen and Unger ? we asked ourselves again and again—for there was no one to be seen, nor any sign of life about the ship. How could it have happened ?

As we reached the bow of the *Alabama*, which was sticking up out of the ice, we caught sight of a sort of tent up on the land, and went up to it.

Karoline and Grogrick had already scented our companions, and started to run ; we checked them just outside the door, and we could hear an oil-stove going inside the tent.

The journey was ended ; we had been out for eighty-three days.

After the first exchange of greetings, we learned what had happened to the ship.

On the 13th of March, ten days after we had started out, the *Alabama* had begun to take in water, and all our clothes, together with such other things as were still on board, had to be brought ashore. Jørgensen and Unger still stayed by the ship, living aft in the cabin, but there also the water rose and rose day by day. Unger was busy building a shelter on shore with planks and the sails, and this was just finished when the water finally forced them both to abandon their quarters in the cabin. The work these two men had done in getting all our gear ashore under such conditions—Jørgensen ill, and the ship full of water—is worthy of all praise.

When Olsen and Poulsen and I reached the harbour, the ice had covered the whole of the after-part of the ship

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as far as the main hatch, while the fore-part was still supported above the surface. On closer examination it appeared that the ribs on the port side were broken, and the mast had gone through the bottom.

The ship would never be seaworthy again, and we decided to get as much timber out of her as possible, and build a house in which to pass the winter, for our return was now to a great extent dependent upon circumstances.

Meanwhile, messages had to be left at the depots on the south-eastern point of Shannon Island, at Bass Rock, and if possible also farther south. On the 1st of June, therefore, Unger and I started off to attend to this; intending also to lay down a depot, consisting of provisions and a kayak, to be placed on the coast for the use of Capt. Mikkelsen and Iversen in case the ice should have broken up between there and Shannon Island by the time they returned.

The journey was completed without mishap in spite of numerous cracks and much open water, the latter extending right up to Bass Rock.

We tried to get in southward to Clavering Fiord, but were stopped at the south end of Pendulum Island by open water, which reached right in to the coast, and stretched away as far as we could see.

At the depot at Bass Rock we found letters from the Danmark Expedition, left there during the winter of 1906, as stated in an open letter from Mylius Erichsen.

We left our messages here and at Shannon Island, with open letters requesting the finder to forward them home, together with the news of the wreck of the *Alabama*.

The 16th of June found us back once more at our winter quarters.

We had only taken three dogs with us on this last trip, Gumboil being so pulled down by the exertions of the first journey that he was never any use for sledge work after. He dragged himself about down by the harbour,

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and ate as much as he wanted every day, until we left Shannon Island, when a bullet ended his life. The Old 'Un suffered a similar fate after our return from the last trip, being so broken down through repeated immersions in crossing the many cracks, that death was a happy release, though we were sorry to have to kill either of them, for one grows almost as fond of one's dogs as if they were human beings.

Immediately on our return we started breaking away the fore-deck of the *Alabama*, and managed to get so much timber out of it that we were able to begin building the house by the 1st of July, and on the 14th we moved in to our new quarters. We felt very proud of ourselves when we turned in on the first evening in our own house. Unger, as carpenter, was the architect, Olsen and I acting as his assistants. We had not had any previous experience in this line and found the work most instructive.

We three were left to ourselves at this time, Jørgensen and Poulsen having gone off to the depot at the S.E. point of Shannon Island to keep a look-out, in case any vessel should appear, and make arrangements with any one they encountered.

As soon as the house was finished Unger and I relieved the look-out party, and it was during our stay there that the yacht *7de Juni* of Aalesund, Capt. Landemark, made its appearance on the 27th of July, 1910, having found the message left at Bass Rock. We arranged with Capt. Landemark to take us home, and the same evening Unger and I started off to walk the twenty-eight miles back to the harbour to inform the others of the ship's arrival.

This trip and the return journey three days later proved most frightful work in every way. There was water on the ice, so that we waded up to our knees, while on the land we had to plough through mud and glacier deposit for three miles, carrying the sledge all the time. During the winter,

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with decent going, we could make the journey in about eight hours, but it took us thirty-six hours' incessant hard work to cover the distance on the last trip down. Even then we were obliged to leave part of our gear six miles from the yacht, which lay moored at the edge of the ice just off the depot, and go up again next day to fetch it.

All through the month of July we waited, expecting Capt. Mikkelsen and Iversen to return, but as they had not arrived by the 1st of August, we started off southwards, being of opinion that we served them better by so doing than by staying on and reducing the stock of provisions. The extra amount thus consumed would render the question of food a serious difficulty, in view of the paucity of game which we had encountered up to that time.

It was with strange feelings that we started from Alabama Harbour, the place which for a year had been our home, and which held so many memories for us. Then also there was the uncertainty as to the fate of our two comrades, whom we had left on the 10th of April up on the inland ice, starting on their way northward to face unknown dangers, hardship and privations. We were all of us persuaded, however, that Capt. Mikkelsen would succeed in fighting his way through, armed as he was with his iron energy and his great knowledge of the Arctic, and with a companion who would stick to him through thick and thin.

On the evening of the 2nd of August we left the Shannon Island depot on board the *7de Juni* and went up along the coast to see once more whether our comrades should have returned. On the 3rd, as they had not arrived, we turned back, but on our way down the ship got stuck in the ice outside Frozen Bay, and did not get clear again until the 7th, when we again visited Shannon Depot to see if there was anything new, but no one had been there.

At midnight we said good-bye to Shannon Island for the last time, and stood out to sea. We had considerable

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difficulty with the ice, the propeller-shaft bent, rendering the motor useless. After a first foretaste of civilisation in the shape of the steam-schooner *Minerva*, which had come up to look for us, we left the ice behind us on the 11th of August, and set our course for Aalesund. We reached there on the evening of the 15th, and were received with the greatest kindness by the Norwegian authorities.



MAP
SHOWING THE ROUTE OF
CAPT. EJNAR MIKKELSEN'S EXPEDITION
1909-1912.

The Names in this Map are left untranslated;
they correspond to the rendering in the text.

EXPLANATION
— autumn 1909
- - - spring and summer 1910
... summer and autumn 1910
- · - · - spring 1912



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